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**ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 10, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Bella Burda of Arlington High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Burda is the first Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Arlington High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Burda as New York's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Burda joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-4 sophomore raced to the New York Federation Championship this past season with a time of 17:56.9. Burda finished second at the Class A state championships, in 17:37.2, and was also second at the Nike Cross Nationals New York Regional championships, in 17:55.2.

Burda has maintained an A average in the classroom. Also a talented musician, she has volunteered locally on behalf of community running programs.

"Bella is an extraordinary athlete, and her career is really just beginning," said Arlington head coach Diana Lucas. "She has such a humble personality, but her competitive nature keeps her one step ahead of her competitors."

Burda will begin her junior year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Burda joins Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jillian Fanning (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11 & 2009-10, Cornwall Central High School) and Emily Lipari (2008-09 & 2007-08, Roslyn) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

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