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**Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)**

**FORT MYERS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE FLORIDA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2014) — In its 29<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Emily Edwards of Fort Myers High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Edwards is the first Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Fort Myers 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 Edwards as Florida'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, Edwards 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-10 senior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:09.24. Edwards also won the Southwest Florida Invitational, the District 11 championship, the Region 3 title and the Lee County Athletic Conference crown. She finished second at the FSU Pre-State Invitational and the flrunners.com Invitational.

Edwards has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA in the classroom. Also a talented musician, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs, and has raised funds to benefit cancer and leukemia research.

"Emily is currently running at a high level," said Fort Myers head coach Kelly Heinzman-Britton. "She's also proven to be a great leader, on and off the course. She's just an extraordinary young lady, and without a doubt, one of the school's best all-around students."

Edwards has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of Alabama beginning in the fall of 2014.

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.

Edwards joins Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Bridget Blake (2012-13, Dr. Phillips High School), Olivia Ortiz (2011-12, Lakewood Ranch High School), Kathryn Fluehr (2010-11 & 2009-10, The Community School of Naples), and Ashley Brasovan (2008-09 & 2007-08, Wellington) 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 [www.gatorade.com/poy](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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