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Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

MOUNTAIN VIEW HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE IDAHO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 8, 2014) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Sam McKinnon of Mountain View High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Idaho Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. McKinnon is the first Gatorade Idaho Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mountain View 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 McKinnon as Idaho'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, McKinnon 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-7 senior raced to a Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:26.31, leading the Mavericks to a fifth place finish as a team. A 2013 First Team All-State selection, McKinnon captured fifth place at the 2013 Nike Cross Northwest championships, clocking an 18:14.5 to earn a berth in the 2013 Nike Cross Nationals Final, where she placed 22nd in 18:00.1.

McKinnon has maintained a 3.85 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and her school's debate team, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and as a youth track and field camp counselor.

"Sam McKinnon is not only an exceptional athlete, she is also an exceptional person," said Mountain View High head coach Tracy Harris. "She has persevered through some very difficult circumstances to once again rise to the top."

McKinnon has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Oregon State University 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.

McKinnon joins Gatorade Idaho Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Sierra Manzer (2012-13, Melba High School), Emily Nist (2011-12, Bishop Kelly High School), Kinsey Gomez (2010-11 & 2009-10, Coeur d'Alene High School), Liz Brandon (2008-09, Eagle), and Nicole Nielsen (2007-08, Borah) 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.

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