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**GRISWOLD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE IOWA 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 Rebekah Topham of Griswold High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Topham is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Griswold 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 Topham as Iowa'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, Topham 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 state's returning Gatorade State Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-8 junior raced to her third straight Class 1A individual state championship this past season with a time of 13:56.3 over the 4-kilometer course, leading the Tigers to seventh place as a team. Topham won all eight of her races against in-state competition and placed 16th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in December, clocking a 17:59.4.

A home-schooled student, Topham has maintained an A average in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she has volunteered locally as part of community-beautification projects and on behalf of Ragbrai, a bicycle race across Iowa.

"You can always count on Rebekah to do her absolute best in all races regardless of outside conditions and factors," said David Ramsey, Topham's club coach with the Brocaw Blazers. "She has shown that she is willing to do what is best for the team even if it meant sacrificing individual awards and honors."

Topham will begin her senior 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.

Two-time winner Topham joins Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anna Holdiman (2012-13, Waverly-Shell Rock High School), Shelby Houlihan (2010-11, East High School), Katie Flood (2009-10 & 2007-08, Dowling Catholic), and Ashlie Decker (2008-09, Dowling Catholic) 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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