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**HADDONFIELD MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 Briana Gess of Haddonfield Memorial High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gess is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Haddonfield Memorial 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 Gess as New Jersey'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, Gess 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-8 freshman raced to the state Meet of Champions individual title this past season with a time of 17:44.78. Gess also won the Group 2 state title with a time of 18:15.1, leading the Bulldawgs to second place as a team. Gess took fifth at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and earned All-American status by finishing 13th nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 17:52.

Gess has maintained an A average in the classroom. A devoted member of her church youth group and choir, she has volunteered locally on behalf of retirement homes and has served as an academic tutor.

"Briana is intelligent and talented, but she doesn't get by on her gifts alone," said Haddonfield head coach Mike Busarello. "She's an extremely hard worker, both in the classroom and on the track."

Gess will begin her sophomore 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.

Gess joins Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Sarah Dianza (2012-13, High Point Regional High School), Holly Bischof (2011-12, Bishop Eustace Preparatory School), Megan Venables (2010-11, Highland Regional High School), Chelsea Ley (2009-10, Kingsway Regional), and Melanie Thompson (2008-09 & 2007-08, Voorhees), 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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