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**ST. URSULA ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Annie Heffernan of St. Ursula Academy as its 2013-14 Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Heffernan is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Ursula Academy.

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 Heffernan as Ohio'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, Heffernan 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 junior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:13.9. A 2013 First Team All-State selection, Heffernan earned 11th place at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 19:24.1, and was the fastest Ohio competitor at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, finishing 14th with a time of 18:12.

Heffernan has maintained a 4.43 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, she has volunteered locally as a peer tutor and as a youth track and field camp counselor.

"Annie Heffernan was clearly the best runner in Ohio this season," said Scott Ridder, head coach at Mother of Mercy High. "She was incredibly consistent and in my experience she always conducted herself with class and good sportsmanship."

Heffernan 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.

Heffernan joins Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Mary Kate Vaughn (2012-13, Oakwood High School), Claudia Saunders (2011-12, Princeton High School), Michelle Thomas (2010-11, Glen Este High School), Madeline Chambers (2009-10, Magnificat), Stephanie Morgan (2008-09, Barnesville), and Claire Durkin (2007-08, Worthington Kilbourne) 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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