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**ABINGTON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE PENNSYLVANIA 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 Tessa Barrett of Abington Heights High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Barrett is the first Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Abington Heights 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 Barrett as Pennsylvania'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, Barrett 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-3 senior raced to the national title at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 17:16. Barrett also won the Class AAA individual state championship with a course-record time of 17:30 and was first at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships in 17:32.2.

A home-schooled student, Barrett has maintained a 3.97 GPA as certified by the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School. She has volunteered locally on behalf of a playground rebuilding project and the St. Joseph's Center women's outreach program. She has also donated her time raising funds to benefit Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"Tessa has faced a lot of adversity in her career, but rather than discourage her or cause her to give up hope, it has done the opposite," said Abington Heights coach Rob Ahrens. "There is a drive in her that far exceeds that of her competitors."

Barrett has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Penn 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.

Barrett joins Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Courtney Smith (2012-13, Unionville High School), Angel Piccirillo (2011-12 & 2010-11, Homer-Center High School), Sara Sargent (2009-10, Pennsbury), Sophia Ziemian (2008-09, Lewisburg Area), and Neely Spence (2007-08, Shippensburg) 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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