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**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Amelia Paladino of University High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Paladino is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from University 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 Paladino as West Virginia'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, Paladino 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 senior raced to the Class AAA individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:55.84, leading the Hawks to a third-place finish as a team. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Paladino earned second place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships, crossing the line in 17:04. At the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, she earned All-American honors by finishing 11th in 17:45.

Paladino has maintained a 4.12 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and her school's concert choir, she is a student council representative and has volunteered locally on behalf of the West Virginia Public Theater and in association with the faith-based Young Life ministry.

"Amelia Paladino is a great motivational leader for her team in both cross country and track & field," said University High co-head coach Ed Frohnapfel. "She continually displays good sportsmanship and is an excellent role model for fellow athletes and all students at her school. She is a team player and a proven winner."

Paladino remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Paladino joins Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Maggie Drazba (2012-13 & 2011-12, St. Marys High School), Sarah McCauley (2010-11, Philip Barbour High School), Alex Dent (2009-10, Hurricane), and Letitia Propst (2008-09 & 2007-08, Elkins) 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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