

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

MOUNT TABOR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Kayla Montgomery of Mount Tabor High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Montgomery is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mount Tabor 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 Montgomery as North Carolina'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, Montgomery 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-2 senior distance runner won the Class 4A individual state championship with a time of 17:29.12 this past season, leading the Spartans to fifth place as a team. An Honorable Mention selection on DyeStat's national individual rankings, Montgomery captured 11th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 17:22. Despite having been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she finished just two seconds shy of earning a bid to the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, recording the fastest time in history by a non-qualifying female athlete at the event. Her time of 17:22 at the Foot Locker South Regional championships ranked as North Carolina's fastest prep girls 5K time of the season.

Montgomery has maintained a 4.64 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's Latin and art clubs as well as the National Honor Society, National English Honor Society and National Art Honor Society, she has volunteered locally as part of numerous community-service initiatives on behalf of her church, including a Christmas gift-giving campaign, at homeless shelters and on service-mission trips to New York City, Puerto Rico and Guatemala.

"Kayla Montgomery's story is the most inspiring I have seen in 20 years," said Nate Newsome, head coach of rival West Forsyth High. "The more we learned of her situation, the more we rooted for her despite being her opponent. I have watched her grow from a slightly above-average runner into one of the top runners in state history. On top of that, she's battling multiple sclerosis the whole way. She has been the toughest of competitors and humblest of victors. She is aware of the gift of time and has voiced wanting to run as fast as she can while she can. I can honestly say Kayla Montgomery has positively impacted me as a coach and my runners as a model of how to endure."

Montgomery has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Lipscomb University beginning 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.

Montgomery joins Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Megan Sullivan (2012-13, Broughton High School), Sammy George (2011-12, Millbrook High School), Darby Middlebrook (2010-11, Watauga High School), Wesley Frazier (2009-10, Ravenscroft School), and Adrienne Soo (2008-09 & 2007-08, Durham Academy) 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.

###