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HAR-BER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 8, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Elise Reina of Har-Ber High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Reina is the second Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Har-Ber 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 Reina as Arkansas'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, Reina 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 junior raced to the Class 7A individual state title this past season with a time of 19:11.3. Also the 2014 All-NWA Media Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Reina was the fastest Arkansas competitor at the Chile Pepper Cross Country Festival, crossing the line in 12th place with a time of 18:54.3. She also broke the tape at the Class 7A West regional meet in 19:19.3.

Reina has maintained a 3.60 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and her school's math club, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Samaritan Community Center and her church youth group.

"Elise Reina is a champion," said Har-Ber head coach Brett Unger. "I have never seen an athlete with such ability to dig deep and find the will to win. She is more than a distance runner. She is an athlete. She works extremely hard and has an unbelievable mix of speed, strength, and endurance to go along with her grit, determination, and desire."

Reina has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of Kansas beginning in the fall of 2016.

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.

Reina joins Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Kyandra Chandler (2013-14, Nettleton High School), Maggie Montoya (2012-13 & 2011-12, Rogers High School), Valerie Reina (2010-11, Har-Ber High School), Erika Setzler (2009-10, Conway), and Grace Heymsfield (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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