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**BIGFORK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MONTANA 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 Makena Morley of Bigfork High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Morley is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bigfork 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 Morley as Montana'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, Morley 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 senior captured a bronze medal at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 17:29 this past season. The state's three-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Morley broke the tape at the Foot Locker West Regional championships in 17:33.5. She also took fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships in 19:15.5 in addition to winning a fourth consecutive Class B individual state championship with a state-record time of 16:33.20, leading the Vikings to second place as a team. Since the inception of the award in 2007, Morley becomes one of only eight girls distance racers nationwide to claim Gatorade State Cross Country Runner of the Year honors in all four years of high school.

Morley has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's garden club, she has volunteered as a youth running instructor, as part of the Bigfork High annual summer fun run and as a member of the school's Bigfork Buddies mentoring program for elementary school students.

"Makena is a winner on and off the running fields," said Andrew Gideon, head coach of rival Lincoln County High. "She is a gracious winner and worked hard for her success. She grew in the past year in her character with the development and success of her sister (and District champion), Bryn, who learned much from her older sister about running, work ethic and success."

Morley has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on an athletic scholarship at the University of Montana 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.

Three-time winner Morley joins Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Caroline Hardin (2010-11, Bozeman High School), and Heidi Turner (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Bozeman), 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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