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**GRAND FORKS CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Karly Ackley of Grand Forks Central High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Ackley is the first Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Grand Forks Central 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 Ackley as North Dakota'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, Ackley 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-11 sophomore won the Class A individual state championship with a time of 13:57.10 this past season, leading the Knights to second place as a team. A three-time Class A All-State performer, Ackley finished 24th at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 18:22.80. In addition to finishing unbeaten against North Dakota prep cross country competitors in 2014, her winning time at the state meet and her NXN regional clocking, respectively, ranked as the state's fastest 4K and 5K times of the season.

Ackley has maintained a 4.13 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered as part of the Wild Hog Half Marathon in Grand Forks.

"She is a great sport, and she competes with class and dignity," said Lisa Herman, head coach of rival Fargo Davies High. "She has been a wonderful role model for the young girls on her team, and you can see just how strong of a leader she is by how their team has improved so quickly. She has remained humble during her rise to success when others doubted her ability, which can be a hard thing to maintain for many athletes."

Ackley will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Ackley joins Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jordan Jacob (2013-14, Century High School), Brittany Brown Otter (2012-13, Bismarck High School), Tarin Lachowitz (2011-12, 2010-11 & 2009-10, Davies High School), Alissa Mears (2008-09, West Fargo), and Lindsay Anderson (2007-08, Leeds) 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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