

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**U-32 HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Rena Schwartz of U-32 High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Schwartz is the first Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from U-32 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 Schwartz as Vermont'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, Schwartz 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-3 freshman raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:49, leading the Raiders to second place as a team. Schwartz also won the NVAC Mountain Championships and the Harwood Union Invitational, and clocked the fastest time by a Vermont runner at the New England Cross Country Championships, finishing 13th overall in 19:01.

Schwartz has maintained an A average in the classroom. Also a talented musician, she has volunteered locally as a Nordic skiing instructor.

"I've been coaching endurance sports for the past 40 years and I've never had an athlete who was as fast as Rena at such an early age," said U-32 coach Mark Chaplin. "Rena not only has incredible natural talent, but she pushes herself hard in both practices and races, in a constant effort to improve."

Schwartz will begin her sophomore 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.

Schwartz joins Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Autumn Eastman (2013-14, Champlain Valley Union High School), Elle Purrier (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Richford High School), Hannah Rowe (2009-10 & 2008-09, St. Johnsbury Academy), and Sarah Lange (2007-08, Brattleboro Union) 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.

###