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Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**CAPITAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Peyton Panger of Capital High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Panger is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Capital 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 Panger as West Virginia'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, Panger 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 won third straight conference crown and her fourth consecutive regional title this fall, leading the Cougars to a 3-peat as Region III champions. A 2014 First Team All-State selection, Panger won all four in-state invitational meets she entered in 2014 and posted an impressive 16th-place showing in North Carolina's prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival Race of Champions field, earning National Silver Standard recognition from MileSplit. Panger took second place at the Class AAA state meet in 18:51.7 and also competed at the Foot Locker South Regional championships, where she finished 52nd in 18:18.

Panger has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. A member of the National Honor Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army and the Village Chapel Presbyterian Church in addition to serving as a peer tutor and mentor.

"Peyton Panger is an exceptional talent with an unbelievable work ethic," said Capital High head coach Jared Smith. "Her dedication and leadership make everyone better."

Panger has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of West Virginia 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.

Panger joins Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Amelia Paladino (2013-14, University High School), Maggie Drazba (2012-13 & 2011-12, St. Marys High School), Sarah McCauley (2010-11, Philip Barbour High School), Alex Dent (2009-10, Hurricane), and Letitia Propst (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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