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**ORONO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MAINE GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 14, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Tia Tardy of Orono High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Tardy is the first Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Orono 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 Tardy as Maine'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, Tardy 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 junior won the Class C state meet with a time of 19:43.81 this past season, breaking the tape 15.43 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Riots to the state championship as a team. A transfer from Mattanawcook Academy, Tardy placed fourth at the Maine Festival of Champions and 12th at the New England Cross Country Championships. She did not lose a race to an in-state distance runner in 2015.

Tardy has maintained an A average in the classroom. The co-founder of the Lincoln Lakes Track Club, she has volunteered locally as part of area beautification projects and with multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit diabetes research.

"Watching Tia Tardy run, she is clearly a driven competitor who is all businesses when it comes to racing," said Nick Scott, head coach of Boothbay Region High. "She is an intelligent racer who often starts a race under control and finishes strong."

Tardy will begin her senior 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.

Tardy joins Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Katherine Leggat-Barr (2014-15, Greely High School), Kirstin Sandreuter (2013-14, Greely High School), Bethanie Brown (2012-13, Waterville High School), Abbey Leonardi (2011-12, 2010-11, 2009-10 & 2008-09, Kennebunk High School), and Anna Makaretz (2007-08, Yarmouth High School) 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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