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**STE. GENEVIEVE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Taylor Werner of Ste. Genevieve High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Werner is the first Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Ste. Genevieve 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 Werner as Missouri'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, Werner 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.).

A three-time Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Werner captured a fourth consecutive Class 3 individual state championship with a course-record time of 17:14.22 this past season, leading the Dragons to the team title. Also the 2013-14 Gatorade Missouri Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, the 5-foot-6 senior distance runner won the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 16:57.30, and then took fifth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 17:29.80. Unbeaten against Missouri competition in 2015, her performance at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional ranked as the state's fastest 5K among prep competitors this past fall.

Werner has maintained an A average in the classroom and served as a member of her school's student council and spirit club as well as the National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. In addition to donating her time as an altar server at her church, she has volunteered locally on behalf of Trick or Treat for Canned Goods, the American Red Cross, the Adopt A Highway Maintenance Corporation and as part of a holiday gift-giving campaign in association with a senior citizen Christmas dinner.

"You know of her athletic ability, but she is also a great example of sportsmanship as witnessed by our team at the state cross country championships, where she led her first-place team to take a picture with our second-place team all together," said Jim Lohr, head coach at rival Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day School. "There are few sports where this is fine, and she made it happen. And she is respected here in Missouri by both runners and coaches for her ability as well as her faith and character. She has been great to watch over the last four years."

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

Werner joins Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Hannah Long (2014-15, Eureka High School), Taylor Werner (2013-14 & 2012-13, Ste. Genevieve High School), Samantha Nightingale (2011-12, Blue Springs South High School), Colleen Quigley (2010-11, Nerinx Hall), Emily Sisson (2009-10 & 2008-09, Parkway Central High School), and Diane Robison (2007-08, Parkway Central 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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