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**MILLARD SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Somers of Millard South High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Somers is the first Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard South 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 Somers as Nebraska'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, Somers 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 junior raced the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:34.9. A three-time First Team All-State selection, Somers was the fastest Nebraska competitor at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line 26th in 18:30. She also finished 32nd at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 18:29.6.

Somers has maintained a 4.06 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's leadership council, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Open Door Mission and as a youth track & field coach.

"Taylor Somers had an incredible season," said Colin Johnston, head coach at Millard West High. "She was never really pushed because she is head and shoulders above everyone else. Not only is she a great competitor and runner, but she is also very humble and supportive of other teams and athletes."

Somers 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.

Somers joins Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jeralyn Poe (2014-15, 2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Lincoln North Star High School), Aubree Worden (2010-11 & 2009-10, Scottsbluff High School), Kelli Budd (2008-09, Marian High School), and Emily Sisson (2007-08, Millard North 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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