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MAINLAND REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 Alyssa Aldridge of Mainland Regional High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Aldridge is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mainland Regional 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 Aldridge as New Jersey'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, Aldridge 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-2 sophomore raced to victory at the state Meet of Champions this past season with a time of 18:07. Aldridge also won the Group 3 individual state championship in 18:13. She broke the tape first at the Brown Invitational, the Shore Coaches Invitational and the Cherokee Challenge, and finished 23rd nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Aldridge has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of Our Children Making Change and a charity road race.

"Alyssa is the most hard-working individual I have coached in my 26 years at Mainland," said Mainland head coach Dan Heyman. "She shows nothing but the utmost respect for her competition, and helps make everyone around her better."

Aldridge will begin her junior 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.

Aldridge joins Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Eve Glasergreen (2014-15, North Hunterdon High School), Briana Gess (2013-14, Haddonfield Memorial High School), Sarah Disanza (2012-13, High Point Regional High School), Holly Bischof (2011-12, Bishop Eustace Preparatory School), Megan Venables (2010-11, Highland Regional High School), Chelsea Ley (2009-10, Kingsway Regional High School), and Melanie Thompson (2008-09 & 2007-08, Voorhees 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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