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**SOUTH KINGSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 Ellie Lawler of South Kingstown High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Lawler is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from South Kingstown 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 Lawler as Rhode Island'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, Lawler 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-8 sophomore earned All-American honors this past season by placing 14th at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 17:56.6. Lawler set a course and state record at the All-State Meet with a time of 17:29.28, breaking the tape 45.06 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. She finished second at the 2015 New England Cross Country Championships and was the 2014 Freshman State Meet champion.

Lawler has maintained a weighted 4.90 GPA in the classroom. A class officer at South Kingstown High, she has volunteered locally as a youth swim instructor and on behalf of multiple community-service initiatives in association with her church.

"Ellie Lawler, wow she is fun to watch," said Annmarie Marino, head coach of Barrington High. "Her season was flawless. She takes the race out quick and maintains that brisk pace throughout. Runners with that style are tough to beat. The more challenging the course, the more at home she becomes."

Lawler 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.

Lawler joins Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Emma McMillan (2014-15, 2013-14 & 2012-13 Barrington High School), Molly Keating (2011-12 & 2010-11, La Salle Academy), Abigail Jones (2009-10, Barrington High School), Jenna Riley (2008-09, Coventry High School), and Jeanne Mack (2007-08, La Salle Academy) 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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