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**CENTRAL MAGNET SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 Cuneo of Central Magnet School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Cuneo is the first Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Central Magnet 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 Cuneo as Tennessee'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, Cuneo 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 sophomore raced to her second straight Division I A-AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:21.2, leading the Lady Tigers to a third-place finish as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Cuneo took fourth at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast championships, crossing the line in 17:31. She went on to compete at the Nike Cross Nationals Final where she finished 19th in 17:31.7.

Cuneo has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Key Club and her school's chapter of the Society of Women in Engineering, she has volunteered locally on behalf of her church youth group.

"Taylor Cuneo is certainly an amazing student-athlete," said Stephen Williams, head coach at Riverdale High. "As far as sheer talent and further potential, I sincerely believe that she is the best girls cross country runner in the state. I have watched Cuneo race since she began in middle school, and every time she has a hiccup, she comes back twice as strong at the next race. She is a quality all-around kid who may just continue to get stronger in her remaining high school years."

Cuneo 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.

Two-time winner Cuneo joins Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Bailee Dean (2013-14, Cane Ridge High School), Barbara Lee Ball (2012-13, Lipscomb Academy), Haley Ward (2011-12, McMinn County High School), Joanna Thompson (2010-11, Knoxville Catholic High School), Megan Ferowich (2009-10, Knoxville Catholic High School) and Kathy Kroeger (2008-09 & (2007-08, Independence 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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