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**PHILIP BARBOUR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Jessica Melvin of Philip Barbour High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Melvin is the second Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Philip Barbour 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 Melvin as West Virginia'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, Melvin 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 the Class A-AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:29.3, leading the Colts to a third-place finish as a team. The 2015 Big 10 Conference Runner of the Year, Melvin won the Class A-AA Region II title, crossing the line in 19:54.

Melvin has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. A member of the National Honor Society, she has participated locally in multiple 4-H Club events and competitions.

"Jessica Melvin loves to run for the pure enjoyment of the sport," said Philip Barbour head coach Jim Seaton. "She trains hard and sets the standard for the rest of our team. She is truly dedicated to the sport of cross country."

Melvin 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.

Melvin joins Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Peyton Panger (2014-15, Capital High School), Amelia Paladino (2013-14, University High School), Maggie Drazba (2012-13 & 2011-12, St. Marys High School), Sarah McCauley (2010-11, Philip Barbour High School), Alex Dent (2009-10, Hurricane High School) and Letitia Propst (2008-09 & 2007-08, Elkins 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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