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**MILLARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 22, 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 Seth Hirsch of Millard West High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hirsch is the second Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard West 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 Hirsch as Nebraska's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Hirsch 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.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-6, 100-pound junior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:29.3, leading the Wildcats to a state title as a team. A 2015 Nebraska Coaches Association Boys Cross Country Class A Super-State selection, Hirsch took third at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:05.3. He went on to compete at the NXN Final, where he finished ninth in 15:18.3. He also took sixth at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships (15:11.3), qualifying for the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, where he finished ninth in 15:27. Hirsch is one of only six boys prep runners in the country to compete at both the NXN Final and the FLCCC and earned All-American honors in both races.

Hirsch has maintained a 4.11 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally on behalf of USA Cycling as part of the Jim Johnston Memorial Ride in addition to donating his time as a youth track & field coach.

"Seth Hirsch was as dominant of a runner as I've seen in my time coaching cross country in the state of Nebraska," said Joe Pilakowski, head coach at Papillion La Vista High. "He was head and shoulders above any other runner this year. He may be small in stature, but his hard work and dedication to running makes him a giant. He is among the best runners we've seen in a long time."

Hirsch will begin his 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.

Hirsch joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year John Nownes (2014-15, Creighton Preparatory School), Wyatt McGuire (2013-14, North Platte High School), Joe Harter (2012-13, Millard West High School), Jacob Olson (2011-12 & 2010-11, Kearney High School), Jarren Heng (2009-10 & 2008-09, Norfolk Catholic High School), and Jon Ronhovde (2007-08, Fremont 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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