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**SUNSET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OREGON GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Ember Stratton of Sunset High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Stratton is the first Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Sunset 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 Stratton as Oregon'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/February, Stratton joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Prep., San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-3 sophomore raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:27, leading the Apollos to second place as a team. Stratton finished second nationally at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 17:38.2 to earn All-American honors and placed third at the NXN Northwest Regional championships. She also broke the tape at the Metro League championships, the Flat and Fast Invitational and the Portland Meadows Invitational.

A devoted member of her church's youth group, Stratton has volunteered locally feeding the homeless. "What makes Ember so good as a runner is her focus," said Sunset coach Dan Neeway. "She has a clear vision of the kind of athlete that she wants to be and she sets out every day to pursue it."

Stratton has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Stratton joins Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Ella Donaghu (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Grant High School), Sara Tsai (2012-13 & 2011-12, South Eugene High School), Annamarie Maag (2010-11 & 2009-10, Jesuit High School), and Taylor Wallace (2008-09 & 2007-08, Henley High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Stratton will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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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