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**HOMEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA 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 Lainey Phelps of Homewood High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Phelps is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Homewood 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 Phelps as Alabama'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, Phelps 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-4 freshman raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:02.13, leading the Patriots to the state title as a team. Phelps also won the Dew it on the Trails Invitational, the Crimson Classic, the Hoover Invitational and the Section 3 championship, and finished 22nd at the Foot Locker South Regional championships.

A member of her school's Key Club, Phelps has volunteered locally on behalf of the Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs. "Lainey's talent is like nothing I have ever seen before," said Homewood coach Lars Porter. "She's still trying to figure out how to use her gifts, but she works extremely hard and there's no telling where running will take her." Phelps has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

Phelps joins Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Amaris Tynismaa (2015-16, Montgomery Catholic Preparatory School), Kaitlin York (2014-15, American Christian Academy), Karisa Nelson (2013-14, T.R. Miller High School), Carmen Carlos (2012-13, 2011-12, 2010-11 & 2009-10, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School), and Madeline Morgan (2008-09 & 2007-08, Mountain Brook High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Phelps 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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