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**ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 Anna Sophia Keller of St. Anthony High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Keller is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Anthony 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 Keller as Illinois'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, Keller 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-2 senior raced to her fourth consecutive Class 1A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:32. The state's 2013-14 Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Keller finished 15th nationally at the Nike Cross Nationals Final, earning All-American honors. She won the First to the Finish Classic, the St. Joseph-Ogden Spartan Classic and the Tuscola Classic, and placed fourth at the NXN Midwest Regional championships.

A devoted member of her church community, Keller has served as a peer tutor and has volunteered locally on behalf of a Vacation Bible School. "Her consistency has helped make her one of the most historic female runners in Illinois," said St. Anthony coach Eric Zeller. "She's only the third runner to win four straight cross country championships, and she's the first one to run all four years under 17 minutes."

Keller has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Two-time winner Keller joins Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Judy Pendergast (2015-16, Naperville North High School), Maryjeanne Gilbert (2014-15, Peoria Notre Dame High School), Courtney Ackerman (2012-13, New Trier High School), Amanda Fox (2011-12, Naperville Central High School), Kayla Beattie (2010-11, Woodstock High School), Lavinia Jurkiewicz (2009-10, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School), Lindsay Flanagan (2008-09, Lake Park High School), and Kristin Sutherland (2007-08, Carl Sandburg High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Keller 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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