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**SHAWNEE MISSION NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 Molly Born of Shawnee Mission Northwest High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Born is the first Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Shawnee Mission Northwest 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 Born as Kansas'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, Born 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-8 junior won the Kansas State Cross Country Championships Class 6A title this past season, breaking the tape in 17:32.70 to lead the Cougars to fourth place as a team. Her state meet clocking earned her the Timmons Award for the fastest time of the 3A-5A-6A state title races. Born went on to win the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships with a personal-best 5K time of 16:49.30, qualifying for the NXN Final. At the NXN national meet, she crossed the line 23rd out 199 runners, falling short of All-American honors by 0.9 seconds.

An assistant meet manager for a local youth cross country event, Born has participated in a service mission trip to Guatemala on behalf of her church. "With Molly, there is no off day," said Shawnee Mission Northwest head coach Van Rose. "She churns out consistent efforts and consistent results. She sees every day as an opportunity to get better and she does all the little things to accomplish great things."

Born has maintained a 4.61 weighted GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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 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.

Born joins Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Cailie Logue (2015-16 & 2014-15, Girard High School), Emily Venters (2013-14, Free State High School), Alli Cash (2012-13 & 2011-12, Shawnee Mission West High School), Molly Milbourn (2010-11, El Dorado High School), Avery Clifton (2009-10 & 2008-09, Washburn Rural High School), and Laura Roxberg (2007-08, Blue Valley Northwest High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Born 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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