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**ANNAPOLIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MARYLAND 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 Maria Coffin of Annapolis High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Coffin is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Annapolis 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 Coffin as Maryland'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, Coffin 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 state's returning Gatorade State Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-4 senior finished 10th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season with a time of 17:50.2 to earn All-American honors. In addition, Coffin won the Class 4A state meet for the second straight year in 17:49.38, breaking the tape 5.02 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Panthers to a 14th-place finish as a team. Also the 2015-16 Gatorade State Track & Field Athlete of the Year, she was unbeaten this fall against in-state competition.

A member of her school concert choir, Coffin has volunteered locally as a youth track and field coach and as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her church youth group. "What I respect most about Maria is that she is not the most gifted runner out there," said Ed Purpura, head coach of Severna Park High. "But she is not afraid to make the sacrifices it takes to make yourself truly special. And she is truly special."

Coffin has maintained a weighted 4.53 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Providence College 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.

Two-time winner Coffin joins Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Nora McUmbler (2014-15, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School), Ellie Gonzalez (2013-14, The Catholic High School of Baltimore), Caroline Beakes (2012-13, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School), Hannah Oneda (2011-12, Winters Mill High School), Maura Linde (2010-11, Century High School), Jessie Rubin (2009-10, Thomas S. Wootton High School), Anna Bosse (2008-09, Walter Johnson High School), and Louise Hannallah (2007-08, Winston Churchill High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Coffin 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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