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**FARMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Lauren Peterson of Farmington High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Peterson is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Farmington 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 Peterson as Minnesota'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, Peterson 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-7 sophomore finished 25th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 18:08.8 and 30th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 18:24.6 this past season. Peterson also placed fourth at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships and was fifth at the NXN Heartland Regional championships. A two-time Class AA All-State selection, she took second place at the Class AA state meet.

Peterson has volunteered locally on behalf of Feed My Starving Children and as a youth running coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "It is clear to see that Lauren is not only at the top of her game within the state of Minnesota but also nationally," said Raedi Zimmer, head coach of Apple Valley High. "She has shown the ability to battle back from physical setbacks and still come out on top."

Peterson has maintained a 3.73 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.

Peterson joins Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Bethany Hasz (2015-16 & 2013-14, Alexandria Area High School), Megan Hasz (2014-15, Alexandria Area High School), Maria Hauger (2012-13, 2011-12, 2010-11 & 2009-10, Shakopee High School), Cassy Opitz (2008-09, Eden Prairie High School), and Laura Hughes (2007-08, Mankato West High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Peterson 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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