

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**MILLARD SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Taylor Somers of Millard South High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Somers is the second Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard South 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 Somers as Nebraska'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, Somers 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 Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-4 senior won her second straight Class A state meet title this past season with a time of 18:54.5, breaking the tape 8.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Patriots to a fifth-place finish as a team. A four-time First Team All-State selection, Somers finished 18th at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships and was 43rd at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships.

A member of the PIT Crew, a leadership committee for Millard South athletes, Somers has volunteered locally as part of community-beautification projects and as an elementary-school aide. "Taylor is a talented runner," said Emily Janda, head coach of Millard North High. "From what I've seen, she puts in the time in the summer and does track and field in the spring to condition her for the cross country season."

Somers has maintained a weighted 4.08 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 Somers joins Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jeralyn Poe (2014-15, 2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Lincoln North Star High School), Aubree Worden (2010-11 & 2009-10, Scottsbluff High School), Kelli Budd (2008-09, Marian High School), and Emily Sisson (2007-08, Millard North High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Somers 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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