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**MAINLAND REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 Alyssa Aldridge of Mainland Regional High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Aldridge is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mainland Regional 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 Aldridge as New Jersey'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, Aldridge 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 junior raced to victory at the NJSIAA Meet of Champions this past season with a time of 17:55. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Aldridge won the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships in 17:40.3 and placed 13th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships to earn All-American honors. She also captured the Group 3 state title in 18:07.

Aldridge has volunteered locally on behalf of Our Children Making a Change as well as youth running programs. "Alyssa has staked her claim as one of the greatest runners in New Jersey history," said Mainland coach Dan Heyman. "Despite all of her accomplishments, she remains humble and continues to strive for improvement."

Aldridge has maintained a 4.0 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.

Two-time winner Aldridge joins Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Eve Glasergreen (2014-15, North Hunterdon High School), Briana Gess (2013-14, Haddonfield Memorial High School), Sarah Dianza (2012-13, High Point Regional High School), Holly Bischof (2011-12, Bishop Eustace Preparatory School), Megan Venables (2010-11, Highland Regional High School), Chelsea Ley (2009-10, Kingsway Regional High School), and Melanie Thompson (2008-09 & 2007-08 Voorhees High School), as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Aldridge 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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