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**SARATOGA SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW YORK GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Kelsey Chmiel of Saratoga Springs High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Chmiel is the first Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Saratoga Springs 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 Chmiel as New York'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, Chmiel 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-5 sophomore raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:17.5. Chmiel also won the New York Federation Championship in 18:10.2 and took first at the Section 2 championships. She took second at the Nike Cross Nationals New York Regional championships and placed fifth nationally at the NXN Final in 17:41.1, earning All-American honors.

Also a talented musician and a devoted member of her church community, Chmiel has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs. "Kelsey is one of the most dedicated and determined runners we have ever coached," said Saratoga Springs coach Linda Kranick. "She truly enjoys the competition, and she's willing to work hard to succeed."

Chmiel has maintained an A average 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.

Chmiel joins Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jessica Lawson (2015-16 & 2013-14, Coming-Painted Post High School), Bella Burda (2014-15 & 2012-13, Arlington High School), Jillian Fanning (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11 & 2009-10, Cornwall Central High School), and Emily Lipari (2008-09 & 2007-08, Roslyn High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Chmiel 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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