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**MILLARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 30, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Seth Hirsch of Millard West High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hirsch is the second Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard West 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 Hirsch as Nebraska's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Hirsch 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.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-7, 115-pound senior captured a bronze medal at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships and took fourth at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, earning First Team All-American honors at both events. Hirsch also won his second-straight Class A state meet title with a time of 15:04.9, breaking the tape 32.7 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Wildcats to a first-place finish as a team. He ran 14:56 at the Millard West Invite on Sept. 30, becoming the first Nebraska runner to break 15 minutes over a distance of 5K.

A member of the National Honor Society, Hirsch has volunteered locally on behalf of the Jim Johnston Memorial Ride and as a youth running coach. "Seth is clearly the best long-distance runner Nebraska has ever had and he proved it on the national level as well," said Sean McMahon, head coach of Fremont High. "He has an unparalleled training level and work ethic."

Hirsch has maintained a weighted 4.19 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Wisconsin 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 Hirsch joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year John Nownes (2014-15, Creighton Preparatory School), Wyatt McGuire (2013-14, North Platte High School), Joe Harter (2012-13, Millard West High School), Jacob Olson (2011-12 & 2010-11, Kearney High School), Jarren Heng (2009-10 & 2008-09, Norfolk Catholic High School), and Jon Ronhovde (2007-08, Fremont High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hirsch 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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