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**PEORIA NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Maryjeanne Gilbert of Peoria Notre Dame High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gilbert is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Peoria Notre Dame 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 Gilbert as Illinois'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, Gilbert joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-7 junior raced to the Class 2A individual state championship this past season, clocking a meet-record time of 16:12. Gilbert also won conference, regional and sectional titles and broke the tape at the Canton Invitational, the Richard Spring Invitational, the Peoria Invitational and the Metamora Runnin' Red Invitational. She captured bronze at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 17:29 and took 12th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, earning All-American honors in the process.

Gilbert has maintained a 4.19 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she participates on her school's yearbook staff and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Anchor Club community service organization.

"Maryjeanne is quite impressive in what she does to improve herself as a person and as an athlete," said Notre Dame coach Dan Gray. "She's a quick learner on running form issues, and a real student of the sport from a training standpoint. She's a joy to have as a teammate, and for me as a coach."

Gilbert 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 high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Gilbert joins Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anna Sophia Keller (2013-14, St. Anthony High School), Courtney Ackerman (2012-13, New Trier High School), Amanda Fox (2011-12, Naperville Central High School), Kayla Beattie (2010-11, Woodstock High School), Lavinia Jurkiewicz (2009-10, Whitney M. Young Magnet), Lindsay Flanagan (2008-09, Lake Park), and Kristin Sutherland (2007-08, Carl Sandburg) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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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