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GATORADE® NATIONAL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR: KATIE RAINSBERGER

Colorado Springs, Colo. (Jan. 21, 2016) - In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Katie Rainsberger of Air Academy High School (Colorado Springs, Colo.) as its 2015-16 Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year.

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 Rainsberger as the nation's best high school girls cross country runner. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select Rainsberger from nearly 220,000 high school girls cross country runners nationwide. Rainsberger is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The 5-foot-9 senior raced to the national title at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, breaking the tape in 16:56.8. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Rainsberger was unbeaten against all distance competition in 2015. She won the Class 4A individual state championship with a course-record time of 17:39, leading the Kadets to the state title as a team. Rainsberger also won the NXN Southwest Regional championship in a time of 17:07.

Rainsberger has maintained a weighted 4.49 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and sports editor of her school newspaper, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the USATF as well as charity road races. The recipient of the Sportswomen of Colorado 2015 High School Cross Country Award, Rainsberger has also been honored as a student-athlete by Rotary Club International.

"Katie cemented herself as one of the all-time elite distance runners in a state that has produced exceptional cross country talents," said Erik Boal, editor of DyeStatCAL.com. "Her strongest performances this season came when the stakes were the highest, especially at the NXN Final, where she showcased an impressive combination of maturity, tenacity, strength and speed to cap a four-year quest for a national title. She served as the inspiration for a team that featured three freshmen and a sophomore, leading Air Academy to its first Class 4A state title in the program's 49-year history."

Rainsberger has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Oregon this fall.

"Katie is an exceptional student-athlete who has earned recognition as the nation's best high school girls cross country runner while also excelling in the classroom and making a difference in her community," said Gatorade Chief Marketing Officer Morgan Flatley. "Katie's statistics on the course speak for themselves, but even more impressive is the impact she has had on her teammates and the example she sets for younger student-athletes. Katie represents everything we look to celebrate in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient."

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.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- 2015 NBA first overall pick Karl-Anthony Towns
- Three-time WNBA champion Maya Moore
- Four-time track & field gold medalist Allyson Felix
- Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at

<http://www.gatorade.com/poy>, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS OF THE YEAR

YEAR	NAME	HIGH SCHOOL	STATUS
2015-16	Katie Rainsberger	Air Academy High School, Colorado Springs, CO	High School Senior
2014-15	Anna Rohrer	Mishawaka High School, Mishawaka, IN	Univ. of Notre Dame
2013-14	Alexa Efraimson	Camas High School, Camas, WA	Pro runner for Nike
2012-13	Sarah Baxter	Simi Valley High School, Simi Valley, CA	Univ. of Oregon
2011-12	Molly Seidel	University Lake, Hartland, WI	Univ. of Notre Dame
2010-11	Aisling Cuffe	Cornwall Central, New Windsor, NY	Stanford University
2009-10	Megan Goethals	Rochester, Rochester Hills, MI	Team USA Minnesota
2008-09	Jordan Hasay	Mission College Prep, San Luis Obispo, CA	Nike Oregon Project
2007-08	Ashley Brasovan	Wellington, Wellington, FL	Duke University Grad.

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