

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)**

**LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WASHINGTON BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 12, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced James Mwaura of Lincoln High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Mwaura is the first Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lincoln 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 field, distinguishes Mwaura as Washington'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, Mwaura 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 5-foot-7, 130-pound senior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:48.3. Mwaura also won the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships in 15:06.8 and placed fourth nationally at the NXN Final, earning First Team All-American status. He also earned victories at the prestigious Nike BorderClash, the Fort Steilacoom Invitational, the Nike Portland XC Invitational and the Pierce County League championships.

A devoted member of his church community, Mwaura has volunteered locally on behalf of community clean-up initiatives. "I've been the head coach here for 22 years and I have never had a more accomplished runner," said Lincoln coach Duane Lee. "But even better than his times and performances is his character. James is very humble, thoughtful, considerate and an excellent leader."

Mwaura has maintained a B average in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Mwaura joins Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Tibeđu Proctor (2016-17, The Northwest School), Justin Janke (2015-16, North Central High School), Tanner Anderson (2014-15, North Central High School), Kai Wilmot (2013-14, North Central High School), Andrew Gardner (2012-13, Mead High School), Nathan Weitz (2011-12, Shadle Park High School), Kenji Bierig (2010-11, Lewis & Clark High School), Shane Moskowitz (2009-10, Central Kitsap High School), Andrew Kimpel (2008-09, North Central High School), and Miles Unterreiner (2007-08, Gig Harbor High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Mwaura 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 the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

###