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Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2014) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Austin Sprague of St. Pius X Catholic High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Sprague is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Pius X Catholic 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 Sprague as Georgia'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, Sprague 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.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-11 senior distance runner raced to a second consecutive Class AAA individual state championship with a time of 16:08.37 this past season, leading the Golden Lions to the state title as a team. The Co-Runner of the Year as named by the Atlanta Track Club, Sprague captured fourth place at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships in 15:09.40, and then placed 32nd at the NXN Final in 15:35. He finished among the top 30 at both the 2011 and 2012 Foot Locker South Regional championships as a sophomore and junior.

Sprague has maintained a 3.17 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating his time to children on the Autism spectrum as a camp counselor at PEOTSI Day Camp, he has volunteered on behalf of Project Open Hand.

"Austin is the fiercest competitor that I've ever coached," said Saint Pius X Catholic head coach Ryan McClay. He does everything right, but is still able to maintain a strong academic standing at the school and balance his social life as well. He has had a goal since his freshman year of making it to nationals, and I was so happy when he accomplished that this year."

Sprague has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Furman University beginning 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.

Sprague joins Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Josh Brickell (2012-13 & 2011-12, Peachtree Ridge High School), Cody Barger (2010-11, North Hall High School), Kirubel Erassa (2009-10, Grayson), Taylor Lord (2008-09, Chapel Hill), and Zack Flickinger (2007-08, Lassiter) 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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