

Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**JACKSON ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Curt Knight of Jackson Academy as its 2013-14 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Knight is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Jackson Academy.

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 Knight as Mississippi'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, Knight 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 junior distance runner raced to a third consecutive Mississippi Association of Independent Schools Class AAA individual state championship with a time of 16:15.70 this past season, leading the Raiders to second place as a team. A three-time MAIS Class AAA First Team All-State selection, Knight captured 100th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 15:56, clocking Mississippi's fastest 5K run of the fall.

Knight has maintained a 3.60 GPA in the classroom. An Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America, he has volunteered on behalf of his church's youth group and at a local soup kitchen.

"Curt has distinguished himself from the competition for several years," said Jackson Academy head coach Ray Higgins. "He runs with a passion year-round. He sets a very high standard for himself, our team, our meets and our state. He is always trying to raise his effort and lower his time. He is a very humble and disciplined young man."

Knight will begin his 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.

Knight joins Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Will Murphey (2012-13, Oak Grove High School), Jordan Travis (2011-12, Poplarville High School), Chad Moore (2010-11, Oak Grove High School), and Max Holman (2009-10, 2008-09, & 2007-08 Tupelo) 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.

###