

Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**MCQUEEN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEVADA 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 Kai Benedict of McQueen High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Nevada Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Benedict is the first Gatorade Nevada Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from McQueen 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 Benedict as Nevada'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, Benedict 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-10, 135-pound junior raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:05, leading the Lancers to third place as a team. Benedict also won the Nevada Twilight Classic, the Nevada Union Invitational, the Northern Region Championships, the High Desert League Championships and the Division 1 race at the Stanford Invitational.

Benedict has maintained a 4.13 GPA in the classroom. A member of the 4H Club, he serves as a math and science tutor in his school and has volunteered locally on behalf of a charity road race.

"Kai is a great talent, but that's not what separates him from other runners," said Ed Parise, McQueen High coach. "He is one of the hardest working athletes I've seen in my 20 years of coaching, and he's very dedicated to the sport. He's also a great leader who is respected by his peers."

Benedict 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.

Benedict joins Gatorade Nevada Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jordan Cardenas (2012-13, Reno High School), Nick Hartle (2011-12 & 2010-11, Centennial High School), Wade Meddles (2009-10 & 2008-09, Sierra Lutheran), and Bryan Tibaduiza (2007-08, Galena) 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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