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**BISMARCK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Matt Gotta of Bismarck High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gotta is the third Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bismarck 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 Gotta as North Dakota'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, Gotta 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 senior distance runner raced to the Class A individual state championship with a time of 15:50.50 this past season, leading the Demons to the state title as a team. A three-time All-State selection, Gotta captured 39th place at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 16:12.10. He also won the Western Dakota Conference Championship in 16:09.71. His state meet effort marked North Dakota's fastest 5K time of the fall.

Gotta has maintained a 3.54 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a youth running instructor, he has participated in fundraising efforts to benefit both a teacher and a teammate's parent suffering from cancer. A member of the National Honor Society, Gotta has also volunteered on behalf of the Bismarck Soup Kitchen and the Dakota Zoo.

"He has served to inspire both his teammates and opponents," said Ken Gardner, head coach of rival Jamestown High. "While at cross country meets, it is clear that he's a leader on his team and his teammates look up to him. But beyond that, his opponents also know the hard work and dedication he puts into his sport to achieve success, and this serves as an example to runners across the state."

Gotta 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 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.

Gotta joins Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jake Leingang (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Bismarck High School), Brett Kelly (2009-10, Century), and Joash Osoro (2008-09 & 2007-08, Bismarck) 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.