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**HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Sam Nishi of Harwood Union High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Nishi is the first Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Harwood Union 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 Nishi as Vermont'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, Nishi 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-7, 125-pound junior raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:34.8, leading the Highlanders to the state title as a team. Nishi also won the NVAC Championships, the Burlington Invitational and the Jim Smith Invitational. He was the top Vermont finisher at the New England Cross Country Championships, 19th overall, and at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships, 31st overall.

Nishi has maintained a 4.13 GPA in the classroom. Also a standout Nordic skier, Nishi has volunteered locally on behalf of a food pantry and youth running programs.

"Sam has a unique ability to peak at the most opportune time," said Harwood coach John Kerrigan. "His best races occur during the most important events."

Nishi 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.

Nishi joins Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Daniel Grosvenor (2012-13, Montpelier High School), Malcolm Plunkett (2011-12, South Burlington High School), Brendan Copley (2010-11, Colchester High School), David Sinclair (2009-10, Green Mountain Valley School), Adron Pitmon (2008-09, Mt. Mansfield Union), and Kyle Powers (2007-08, St. Johnsbury Academy) 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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