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**GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Matthew Brafford of George Washington High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Brafford is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from George Washington 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 Brafford as West Virginia'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, Brafford 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-9, 125-pound senior raced to the Class AAA individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:39.53. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Brafford earned 47th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:35. He was also the fastest West Virginia competitor at the Trnity/Valkyrie Invitational, finishing sixth in 15:11.

Brafford has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of Young Life Christian ministries, as a peer mentor and as a youth track and field coach.

"Matthew Brafford really stepped it up in so many ways this year," said Chris Parsons, head coach at Cabell Midland High. "Nobody was really in his league in West Virginia this season. He is a very well-liked, highly respectful, all-around great kid."

Brafford 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.

Brafford joins Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jacob Burcham (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Cabell Midland High School), Cody Pelliccioni (2009-10 & 2008-09, Morgantown), and Ryan Beabout (2007-08, Wheeling Park) 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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