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**DESERT VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE ARIZONA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2015) — In its 30<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Dani Jones of Desert Vista High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Jones is the first Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Desert Vista 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 Jones as Arizona's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Jones 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.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-5 senior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:26, leading the Thunder to the state title as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Jones placed third at the Nike Cross Nationals Final, pacing her team to a fifth-place national finish overall and earning All-American honors in the process. She was also runner-up at the Nike Pre-Nationals, the Woodbridge Classic and the Desert Twilight Festival.

Jones has maintained a 3.71 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and youth sports programs.

"Dani is a fantastic runner and the consummate student-athlete," said Jeff Messer, Desert Vista head coach. "She's universally admired by her teammates and respected by her coaches, and her leadership has provided the foundation for our program's unprecedented evolution and accomplishment."

Jones has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at the University of Colorado 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.

Two-time winner Jones joins Sarah Fakler (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Xavier College Prep.), Jessica Tonn (2009-10 & 2008-09, Xavier College Prep.), and Nadya Bishton (2007-08, Mountain Ridge) 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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