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**STARKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Kate Mattox of Starkville High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Mattox is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Starkville 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 Mattox as Mississippi'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, Mattox 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-9 sophomore distance runner won a second consecutive Class 6A individual state championship with a time of 18:18.40 this past season, leading the Yellow Jackets to second place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Mattox captured 30th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 19:14.78. In addition to finishing unbeaten against Mississippi prep competitors this past fall, Mattox broke the tape at the Bulldog Invitational, where her clocking of 14:55.96 along with her first-place finish at the state meet, respectively, ranked as the state's fastest 4K and 5K times of the season.

Mattox has maintained a 3.92 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's student government and Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, she has volunteered on behalf of her church's youth group as well as at Camp Jigsaw, a summer retreat for children on the autism spectrum.

"While her practices have become even more grueling, she has still fought hard and works just as hard," said Starkville head coach Caroline Woomer. "She would not settle for the times I gave her. She was running after the boys, and her goal was to stay with or beat them. We have some hard workers, so to say she's one of the most hard-working members of our team is saying a lot."

Mattox will begin her junior 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.

Two-time winner Mattox joins Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Regen McGee (2012-13, Pass Christian High School), Christina Daniels (2011-12, Tupelo High School), Elisabeth Gaillet (2010-11, St. Andrew's Episcopal School), and Cory McGee (2009-10, 2008-09, 2007-08, Pass Christian), 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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