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**RIO RICO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 15, 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 Carlos Villarreal of Rio Rico High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Villarreal is the first Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Rio Rico 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 Villarreal as Arizona'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, Villarreal 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, 135-pound senior raced to the Division III individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:24, leading the Hawks to third place as a team. Villarreal finished second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships in 14:55, and was 26th nationally at the NXN Final. He also broke the tape at the Desert Twilight Festival, the Rattler Invitational, the Woodbridge Classic and the Section 2 championships.

Villarreal has maintained a 3.53 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs.

"Carlos is so new to the sport and so eager to learn," said Rio Rico coach Stephen Schadler. "He learns something new about himself and/or running with every race, and his learning curve has been the steepest I've ever witnessed. He has a very bright future."

Villarreal has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on an athletic scholarship at the University of Arizona beginning 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.

Villarreal joins Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Nathan Rodriguez (2013-14, Corona del Sol High School), Bernie Montoya (2012-13 & 2011-12, Cibola High School), Billy Orman (2010-11, Tuba City High School), Brian Shrader (2009-10 & 2008-09, Sinagua), and Jim Walmsley (2007-08, Horizon) 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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