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GILBERT HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE IOWA 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 Thomas Pollard of Gilbert High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Pollard is the first Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Gilbert 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 Pollard as Iowa'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, Pollard 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 returning Gatorade State Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-9, 130-pound senior earned All-American status by placing 12th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 15:29, marking the best finish in the race's history by an Iowa prep for a second straight year (Pollard ran a 15:34 as a junior). Pollard broke the tape at the Class 3A state meet in 15:04.5, more than a minute ahead of his closest competitor, and led the Tigers to a state championship as a team. He placed sixth at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships and won the Heartland Classic for a second straight year.

Pollard has maintained a 4.11 unweighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the Gilbert High student council, he has volunteered locally at a food bank and homeless shelter.

"Thomas's placing and times speak for themselves," said Mitch Anderson, head coach of Mount Pleasant High. "What makes Thomas a great runner is that he can run any race strategy—either sit and kick or at a state-record pace."

Pollard 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.

Two-time winner Pollard joins Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jason Thomas (2012-13, Dowling Catholic High School), Ben Anderson (2011-12, Valley High School), Marshall Moyer (2010-11 & 2009-10, Burlington High School), Lewi Manirumva (2008-09, Washington), and Devin Allbaugh (2007-08, Pleasant Valley) 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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