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**MT. BLUE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MAINE BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 15, 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 Aaron Willingham of Mt. Blue High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Willingham is the first Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mt. Blue 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 Willingham as Maine'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, Willingham 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 6-foot-1, 165-pound senior raced to the Class A individual state championship with a time of 16:00.62 this past season. Also the Runner of the Year as named by the Maine Sunday Telegram, Willingham finished 22nd at the New England Cross Country Championships in 16:16. He clocked a 15:58.30 at the Kennebec Valley Athletic Conference meet on Sept. 11, which ranked as the state's fastest 5K of the season.

Willingham has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. The president of his school's National Honor Society chapter and a member of an improvisational comedy troupe at Mt. Blue High, he has volunteered as a youth running instructor, on behalf of his church and as part of multiple community-outreach programs to benefit the homeless.

"Mt. Blue and Maine cross country in general can count themselves fortunate to have had the chance to get to know Aaron Willingham and watch him compete," said Shawn Totman, head coach of rival Cony High. "His amazing physical ability and mental toughness are impressive. As an opposing coach, you watched him run with the utmost respect."

Willingham 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.

Willingham joins Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Josef Holt-Andrews (2013-14, Telstar Regional High School), Daniel Curts (2012-13, Ellsworth High School), Matt McClintock (2011-12 & 2010-11, Madison Area Memorial High School), Will Geoghegan (2009-10 & 2008-09, Brunswick), and Nick Williams (2007-08, Poland Regional) 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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