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JACKSON ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Curt Knight of Jackson Academy as its 2014-15 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Knight is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Jackson Academy.

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 Knight as Mississippi'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, Knight 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-11, 140-pound senior raced to a fourth consecutive Mississippi Association of Independent Schools Class AAA individual state championship with a time of 16:35.09 this past season, leading the Raiders to fifth place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Knight finished 51st at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 15:45, which ranked as the state's fastest 5K of the season. He finished unbeaten against Mississippi prep cross country runners in 2014.

Knight has maintained a 3.67 GPA in the classroom. An Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America, he has volunteered on behalf of his church's youth group and at a local soup kitchen.

"I have watched Curt for six years, and he has shown the highest level of competitiveness and sportsmanship at the same time," said Pat Lovitt, head coach of rival Madison-Ridgeland Academy. "He has constantly strived to improve and make himself the best runner possible. He has handled his success with grace and dignity and never thought himself to be above any of his competition. He has always been the most gracious champion."

Knight has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on an athletic scholarship at the University of Alabama 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.

Two-time Knight joins Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Will Murphey (2012-13, Oak Grove High School), Jordan Travis (2011-12, Poplarville High School), Chad Moore (2010-11, Oak Grove High School), and Max Holman (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Tupelo) 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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