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Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**MIYAMURA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 Niles Thomas of Miyamura High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thomas is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Miyamura 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 Thomas as New Mexico'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, Thomas 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-8, 165-pound senior raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:33.4, leading the Patriots to third place as a team. Thomas also broke the tape at the UNM Lobo Invitational, the Rio Rancho Jamboree, the Shiprock Invitational, the Zuni Invitational, the Kirtland Central Invitational, the Albuquerque Academy Invitational, the Gallup Invitational and the District championships. He finished 12th at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional Championships.

Thomas has maintained a 3.18 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered speaking to youth in the Navajo Nation about drug and alcohol awareness.

"Niles has demonstrated determination, team leadership and a willingness to succeed in every endeavor of his sports and academic career," said Miyamura coach Robert Torres. "The whole team tried to emulate his attitude and willingness to go beyond his abilities."

Thomas 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.

Thomas joins Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Colin Hemez (2013-14, Los Alamos High School), Luis Martinez (2012-13 & 2011-12, Sue Cleveland High School), Neil Longenbaugh (2010-11, Albuquerque Academy), Kyle Pittman (2009-10, Los Alamos), Bryce Palmer (2008-09, Eldorado), and Ben Johnson (2007-08, Albuquerque Academy) 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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