

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**ST. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Michael Vitucci of St. Xavier High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Vitucci is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Xavier 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 Vitucci as Ohio'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, Vitucci 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-2, 150-pound senior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:34.5, leading the Bombers to a third-place finish as a team. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Vitucci did not lose inside the state of Ohio all season and was the top prep boy from the Buckeye State at the prestigious Trinity/Valkyrie Invitational, placing fourth out of 188 runners from across the Midwest.

Vitucci has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and as a peer mentor in addition to completing a service-mission trip to Virginia on behalf of his church.

"Michael Vitucci's record of success certainly speaks for itself," said Dave Prenger, head coach at Archbishop Moeller High. "I have had opportunities to personally meet him and always found him to be a class act. He has shown himself to be a very gracious winner with true sportsmanship."

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

Vitucci joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Mark Hadley (2013-14, Boardman High School), Sam Wharton (2012-13, Tippecanoe High School), Sam Praker (2011-12, Versailles High School), Michael Brajdic (2010-11, Bay High School), Zach Wills (2009-10 & 2008-09, Mason), and Donny Roys (2007-08, Medina) 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.

###