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**NORMAN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Ben Barrett of Norman North High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Barrett is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Norman North 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 Barrett as Oklahoma'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, Barrett 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, 135-pound senior raced to a second straight Class 6A individual state championship this past season in a meet-record time of 15:20, shattering his own record by 10 seconds and leading the Timberwolves to a third-place finish as a team. A two-time Oklahoman Boys All-City Runner of the Year, Barrett qualified for the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships for the second year in a row, placing 31st in 16:14.

Barrett has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Norman North National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally with the faith-based Young Life organization.

"Ben Barrett is it," said Mike McGarry, head coach of Mustang High. "He can hang with anyone in Oklahoma and then the last 400 to 800 he turns on the jets and it is amazing. I've never seen anyone with his kick speed."

Barrett has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on an athletic scholarship at North Carolina State University 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 winner Barrett joins Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Noah Gade (2012-13, Stillwater High School), Tanner Satterthwaite (2011-12, Norman High School), Andrew Leahey (2010-11, Plainview High School), Toby Bothwell (2009-10, Westmoore), Taylor Monaghan (2008-09, Union), and Steven Baker (2007-08, Union) 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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