

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)**

## **LA SALLE ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 D.J. Principe of La Salle Academy as its 2014-15 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Principe is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from La Salle 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 Principe as Rhode Island'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, Principe 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-6, 121-pound sophomore raced to the state's all-class state championship with a time of 15:37.17 this past season, leading the Rams to the state title as a team. A two-time First Team All-State selection as named by the Providence Journal and Rhode Island Track Coaches Association, Principe also broke the tape at the Class A championships in 15:50.98. He finished sixth at the New England Cross Country Championships in 15:56, eighth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northeast Regional championships in 16:17.70 and 75th at the NXN Final, clocking a 16:20.

Principe has maintained a 4.55 weighted GPA in the classroom. In addition to volunteering at multiple area road races, including the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon, he has participated in food drives for the needy on behalf of his church and as a mentor to prospective La Salle students.

"An athlete such as a D.J. is very rare for a coach to encounter, and there is no doubt that his accomplishments thus far are only the beginning," said La Salle Academy head coach Kenneth Skelly. "Before D.J. ever put on the maroon and white uniform of La Salle Academy, he was already recognized as one of the best talents at the middle school level statewide, regionally and nationally. What impressed me most about him are not only his running abilities, but how well a high school athlete can carry himself in a mature and professional manner."

Principe will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Principe joins Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Colin Tierney (2013-14, Bishop Hendricken High School), Trevor Crawley (2012-13, Cumberland High School), Mike Marsella (2011-12, Chariho High School), Ryan Meehan (2010-11, Bishop Hendricken High School), Jake Sienko (2009-10, Bishop Hendricken), Andrew Springer (2008-09, Westerly), and Nick Ross (2007-08, East Greenwich) 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).

###