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HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE VERMONT 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 Sam Nishi of Harwood Union High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Nishi is the first Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Harwood Union 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 Nishi as Vermont'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, Nishi 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-7, 125-pound senior raced to his second consecutive Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:58.3, leading the Highlanders to the state title as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Nishi also won the NVAC Mountain championships, the Essex Invitational, the U-32 Invitational and the Maine Festival of Champions. He was the top Vermont finisher at the New England Cross Country Championships, 11th overall, and finished 33rd at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships.

Nishi has maintained a 4.15 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of blood-donation drives and youth running programs.

"Sam was a measuring stick all season, for runners, parents and coaches from all over the state and New England," said Harwood coach John Kerrigan. "He's made me want to work harder as a coach, and his leadership has had a huge impact on the performance of our team. We lost 27 seniors from the boys and girls teams of 2013, but with close to 80 percent of the team made up of freshmen and sophomores, we were able to repeat as state champions."

Nishi 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.

Two-time winner Nishi joins Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Daniel Grosvenor (2012-13, Montpelier High School), Malcolm Plunkett (2011-12, South Burlington High School), Brendan Copley (2010-11, Colchester High School), David Sinclair (2009-10, Green Mountain Valley School), Adron Pitmon (2008-09, Mt. Mansfield Union), and Kyle Powers (2007-08, St. Johnsbury 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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