

Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**STARKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 14, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Kate Mattox of Starkville High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Mattox is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Starkville 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 Mattox as Mississippi's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Mattox 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.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The state's three-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Mattox won a third consecutive Class 6A individual state championship with a time of 18:40.50 this past season, leading the Yellow Jackets to third place as a team. The 5-foot-9 junior distance talent placed 32nd at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 18:25. Unbeaten against Mississippi prep competition in 2015, her winning time of 17:59.54 at the Pontotoc Invitational was the state's fastest 5K clocking among prep competitors this past fall.

Mattox has maintained a 4.21 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's student government and Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, she has volunteered on behalf of her church's youth group, as a tutor for students at Starkville's Sudduth Elementary School and at Camp Jigsaw, a summer retreat for children on the autism spectrum.

"She once again proved to be the best girl in the state," said Allen Marett, head coach at rival Clinton High. "Kate showed tremendous character this year in fighting through an illness. We ran against Starkville in the first meet that she returned. I told my best runner that this would be her race to beat Kate. Well, Kate still beat her by over a minute. She is just tough."

Mattox will begin her senior 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.

Three-time winner Mattox joins Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Regen McGee (2012-13, Pass Christian High School), Christina Daniels (2011-12, Tupelo High School), Elisabeth Gaillet (2010-11, St. Andrew's Episcopal School), and Cory McGee (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Pass Christian High School), 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.

###