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**OAK MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 22, 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 Cole Stidfole of Oak Mountain High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Stidfole is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Oak Mountain 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 Stidfole as Alabama'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, Stidfole 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-10, 125-pound junior distance runner clocked the state's fastest time (15:20.45) among prep competitors in 2015 at the 17th annual Jesse Owens Classic this past season. A three-time All-State honoree, Stidfole took second at the Class 7A state meet in 15:32.48, leading the Eagles to fourth place as a team. He also raced to 31st place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships with a time of 15:53.

Stidfole has maintained a 3.57 weighted GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. In addition to annually attending the faith-based FC Alabama Camp, he has donated his time on behalf of his church's youth group.

"I have coached a past Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year in Scott Fuqua, and I can tell you that Cole represents many of the qualities that Fuqua had when he was awarded the honor," said Paul Anderton, head coach at rival Thompson High. "Cole is a determined athlete with good work ethics. He also encourages others on his team."

Stidfole will begin his 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.

Stidfole joins Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Ben Bryant (2014-15, Opelika High School), Mac Macoy (2013-14, Vestavia Hills High School), Payton Ballard (2012-13, Mountain Brook High School), Griffin Lee (2011-12, John Carroll Catholic High School), Brandon Hazouri (2010-11, Spain Park High School), Nathan Lewis (2009-10, Cold Springs High School), and Patrick McGregor (2008-09 & 2007-08, Hoover 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.

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