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**DESERT VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA 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 D. J. Harris of Desert Vista High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Harris is the first Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Desert Vista 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 Harris as Arizona'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, Harris 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-9, 145-pound senior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:50.3, leading the Thunder to the state title as a team. Harris also won the Tempe City championship while finishing 11th at the Desert Twilight Festival and 15th at the Woodbridge (Calif.) Classic.

Harris has maintained a 3.54 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of a charity thrift store and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

"D.J. was outstanding for our team this season," said Desert Vista coach Chris Hanson. "We always knew he had the talent to be the best and he took it to the next level with added focus and determination."

Harris 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.

Harris joins Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Carlos Villarreal (2014-15, Rio Rico High School), Nathan Rodriguez (2013-14, Corona del Sol High School), Bernie Montoya (2012-13 & 2011-12, Cibola High School), Billy Orman (2010-11, Tuba City High School), Brian Shrader (2009-10 & 2008-09, Sinagua High School), and Jim Walmsley (2007-08, Horizon 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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