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## **HAMPDEN ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE MAINE BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 22, 2016) — In its 31<sup>st</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Paul Casavant of Hampden Academy as its 2015-16 Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Casavant is the first Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Hampden 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 Casavant as Maine'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, Casavant 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, 135-pound junior finished second at the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 16:31.26, leading the Broncos to a third-place finish as a team. Casavant placed 20th at the New England High School Interscholastic Cross Country Championships, the highest Maine finisher. A member of the Portland Press Herald All-State team, he won four of eight races on the season.

Casavant has maintained an A average in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. A black belt in Shotokan Karate, he has volunteered locally as a freshman mentor and as a youth running coach.

"Paul Casavant is the most complete runner I have ever coached," said Dick Balentine, head coach of Hampden Academy. "He is the heart and soul of our cross country team, leading by example every day with his enthusiasm and work ethic.

Casavant 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.

Casavant joins Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Aaron Willingham (2014-15, Mt. Blue High School), Josef Holt-Andrews (2013-14, Telstar Regional High School), Daniel Curts (2012-13, Ellsworth High School), Matt McClintock (2011-12 & 2010-11, Madison Area Memorial High School), Will Geoghegan (2009-10 & 2008-09, Brunswick High School), and Nick Williams (2007-08, Poland Regional 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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