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**ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 Isaac Harding of Rockford High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Harding is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Rockford 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 Harding as Michigan'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, Harding 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, 115-pound senior raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:10.4, leading the Rams to the state title as a team. Harding also broke the tape at the Portage Invitational, the MSU Spartan Invitational and the Culver Academies Invitational. He took third at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest championships, ninth at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships and finished 23rd at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Harding has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. He has participated in multiple mission trips with his church youth group.

"Isaac is the most determined athlete that I've coached," said Rockford coach Andrew Martin. "He's a trusted leader and his teammates aspire to emulate him on the course and in the classroom."

Harding 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.

Harding joins Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School), Nick Raymond (2012-13, Erie-Mason High School), Evan Chiplock (2011-12, Heritage High School), Caleb Rhynard (2010-11, Shepherd High School), Michael Atchoo (2009-10, Troy High School), Stephen Walker (2008-09, H.H. Dow High School), and Maverick Darling (2007-08, Ovid-Elsie 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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