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**STARKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 David Patton Little of Starkville High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Little is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys 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 Little as Mississippi'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, Little 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 6-foot senior distance runner's winning time of 15:20.65 was the state's fastest 5K among prep competitors this past season. Little took second at the Class 6A state meet with a time of 16:51.20, leading the Yellow Jackets to third place as a team, and placed 106th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 16:33. He was runner-up in the 17-18 age group at the 2014 Southern Association Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships as a junior.

Little has maintained a 3.95 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Starkville Mayor's Youth Council, he has also volunteered on behalf of his church's youth group and the Boy Scouts of America.

"Patton is an excellent choice for this distinguished award," said Geary Howell, head coach at rival Madison Central High. "He is an outstanding young man who will bring honor to the Gatorade Player of the Year Program."

Little 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.

Little joins Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Curt Knight (2014-15 & 2013-14, Jackson Academy), Will Murphey (2012-13, Oak Grove High School), Jordan Travis (2011-12, Poplarville High School), Chad Moore (2010-11, Oak Grove High School), and Max Holman (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Tupelo 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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