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**STE. GENEVIEVE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Ben Naeger of Ste. Genevieve High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Naeger is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Ste. Genevieve 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 Naeger as Missouri'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, Naeger 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, 125-pound junior distance runner raced to the Class 3 individual state championship with a time of 15:34.56 this past season, leading the Dragons to second place as a team. A three-time All-State honoree, Naeger finished ninth at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in 15:25.40 and 15th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 15:35.10. He was runner-up at the 2014 Class 3 state meet as a sophomore.

Naeger has maintained an A average in the classroom. A member of his school's jazz band, he has donated his time on behalf of the National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and National Trappers Association.

"What a great runner," said Bill Davis, head coach at rival Notre Dame Regional High. "I've had the opportunity to see and enjoy Ben Naeger throughout the last three cross country seasons. He has improved tremendously through lots of hard work and perseverance. He's a fine young man with a lot of heart and determination. His accomplishments speak for themselves."

Naeger 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.

Naeger joins Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Michael Karls (2014-15, Festus High School), Noah Kauppila (2013-14, Marquette High School), Simon Belete (2012-13, Blue Springs High School), Zach Herriott (2011-12 & 2010-11, Rockhurst High School), Maksim Korolev (2009-10, Harrisonville High School), Kevin Colon (2008-09, Lee's Summit West High School), and Eric Fernandez (2007-08, Parkway West 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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