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**LIVERPOOL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Petrella of Liverpool High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Petrella is the first Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Liverpool 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 Petrella as New York'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, Petrella 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-7, 145-pound senior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 15:43, leading the Warriors to the state title as a team. Petrella won the Nike Cross Nationals New York Regional championships in 15:31.4 and placed sixth nationally at the NXN Final. He also broke the tape at the Section 3 championships and the McQuaid Invitational.

Petrella has maintained an A average in the classroom. Also a talented musician and president of his school's chapter of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs and charity road races.

"I've coached state champions and many all-state runners, but Ben Petrella is a once-in-a-lifetime athlete," said Liverpool coach Tracey Vannatta. "He's also one of the best natural leaders I have known."

Petrella will attend the U.S. Military Academy this fall, where he will compete in cross country and track and field.

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.

Petrella joins Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Bryce Millar (2014-15, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Mickey Burke (2013-14, Rush-Henrietta Senior High School), Nick Ryan (2012-13 & 2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Edward Owens (2010-11, The Packer Collegiate Institute), Alex Deir (2009-10, Honeoye Falls-Lima High School), Joe Whelan (2008-09, Hamburg High School), and Patrick Dupont (2007-08, Fairport 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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