

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**BISMARCK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Sam Clausnitzer of Bismarck High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Clausnitzer is the third Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bismarck 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 Clausnitzer as North Dakota'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, Clausnitzer 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 state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Clausnitzer raced to a second consecutive Class A individual state championship with a time of 15:52.10 this past season, leading the Demons to an 11th straight team title. The 5-foot-10 senior distance runner took fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 15:20.50 and finished 13th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 15:33.30. He was 46th at the NXN Final in 15:48.50. Unbeaten against in-state competition, his effort at the NXN Heartland Regional was North Dakota's fastest 5K among prep competitors in 2015.

Clausnitzer has maintained a B average in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a youth running instructor, he has volunteered on behalf of his church's youth group, the Salvation Army, Bismarck's annual Pack the Pantry food drive and Runners Against Destructive Decisions.

"Sam has gotten to the point of being the state's best distance runner and one of the top Heartland Regional runners," said Brad Lies, head coach at rival Century High. "He has done this by being dedicated to training and doing the little things that separate the great ones from the good ones."

Clausnitzer has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on an athletic scholarship at Iowa State University beginning 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.

Two-time winner Clausnitzer joins Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Matt Gotta (2013-14, Bismarck High School), Jake Leingang (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Bismarck High School), Brett Kelly (2009-10, Century High School), and Joash Osoro (2008-09 & 2007-08, Bismarck 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.

###