

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**LA SALLE ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 D.J. Principe of La Salle Academy as its 2015-16 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Principe is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from La Salle Academy.

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 Principe as Rhode Island'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, Principe 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 returning Gatorade State Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-10, 135-pound junior earned All-American honors this past season by placing 17th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final with a time of 15:28.50. The winner of the All-State Meet and the Class A Meet, Principe did not lose to an in-state opponent this fall. He also took third at the NXN Northeast Regional championships in 15:52.3.

Principe has maintained an A average in the classroom. In addition to volunteering at multiple area road races, including the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon, he has participated in food drives for the needy on behalf of his church and as a mentor to prospective La Salle students.

"D.J. Principe is a great talent. His work ethic, dedication and drive make him one of the most dominant runners in Rhode Island history," said Tom Kenwood, head coach of Cumberland High. "He has that extra gear which leaves his competition in the dust."

Principe 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.

Two-time winner Principe joins Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Colin Tierney (2013-14, Bishop Hendricken High School), Trevor Crawley (2012-13, Cumberland High School), Mike Marsella (2011-12, Chariho High School), Ryan Meehan (2010-11, Bishop Hendricken High School), Jake Sienko (2009-10, Bishop Hendricken High School), Andrew Springer (2008-09, Westerly High School), and Nick Ross (2007-08, East Greenwich 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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