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**ASHLEY RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Jackson Ellenburg of Ashley Ridge High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade South Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Ellenburg is the first Gatorade South Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Ashley Ridge 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 Ellenburg as South Carolina'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, Ellenburg 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-10, 145-pound junior distance runner raced to a second consecutive Class AAAA individual state championship with a time of 15:30 this past season, clocking the second-fastest 5K time among South Carolina prep competitors in 2015. The returning All-Low Country Runner of the Year as named by The Post and Courier, Ellenburg finished 65th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 16:16. A three-time Class AAAA All-State honoree, he finished seventh at the 2013 Class AAAA state meet as a freshman.

Ellenburg has maintained a 4.37 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of his school's chess and Ultimate Frisbee clubs as well as the orchestra, he has volunteered locally at multiple charitable road races, as a youth athletic instructor and as part of the Swamp Fest field day for students with special needs.

"I really like Jackson Ellenburg," said Thane Williams, head coach at rival Fort Dorchester High. "He is hardworking and diligent both as a runner and as a student at school. He is friendly and respectful outside of school. He is helpful to his teammates and a good leader."

Ellenburg 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.

Ellenburg joins Gatorade South Carolina Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Micah Williams (2014-15, Greer Middle College Charter High School), Brent Demarest (2013-14 & 2012-13, Porter-Gaud School), Roland Hakes (2011-12 & 2010-11, Dutch Fork High School), Aaron Ramirez (2009-10 & 2008-09, Woodmont High School), and Luke Lovelace (2007-08, Chapin 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.