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**PAPILLION-LA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 24, 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 K.J. Cotton of Papillion-La Vista High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Cotton is the second Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Papillion-La Vista 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 track, distinguishes Cotton as Nebraska's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Cotton joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 5-foot-10, 170-pound junior sprinter captured a pair of individual championships this spring and led the Monarchs to a second-place finish as a team at the Class A state meet. Cotton won the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.55 seconds and the 200-meter dash in 21.55, capturing all-class gold with the fastest times in all competitive classifications for the second straight year. Now a two-time Gatorade Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year, Cotton's winning times in the 100 and the 200 at the state meet were the fifth and seventh-fastest marks, respectively, in Nebraska prep history.

Cotton has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered on behalf of an area food pantry and an annual school carnival fundraiser in addition to donating his time as both a youth football and track & field coach.

"K.J. Cotton is an extremely talented athlete," said Brent Litz, head coach at Bellevue West High. "Going into a track meet, it felt you were competing for second because you knew he was at another level. The interactions I had with him as an opposing coach were always very positive."

Cotton 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 Cotton joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Kenzo Cotton (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Papillion-La Vista High School), Ted Lampkin (2010-11 & 2009-10, Omaha Central High School), Mitchell Hunt (2008-09, Fremont High School), Brett Maher (2007-08, Kearney High School), and Todd Gulizia (2006-07, Millard South High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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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