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**HOMEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ALABAMA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 30, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Will Stone of Homewood High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Stone is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Homewood 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 Stone as Alabama'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, Stone joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Prep., San Luis Obispo, Calif.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-8, 130-pound sophomore raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:01.4, leading the Patriots to the state title as a team. Stone also won the Crimson Classic, the Hoover Invitational and the Section 3 championships. A devoted member of his church youth group, Stone has volunteered locally on behalf of the Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs. "Will is extremely hard-working and focused," said Homewood coach Lars Porter. "He's obviously gifted athletically, but it's his mental approach that separates him."

Stone has maintained a 4.12 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Stone joins Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Cole Stidfole (2015-16, Oak Mountain High School), Ben Bryant (2014-15, Opelika High School), Mac Macoy (2013-14, Vestavia Hills High School), Payton Ballard (2012-13, Mountain Brook High School), Griffin Lee (2011-12, John Carroll Catholic High School), Brandon Hazouri (2010-11, Spain Park High School), Nathan Lewis (2009-10, Cold Springs High School), and Patrick McGregor (2008-09 & 2007-08, Hoover High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Stone will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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