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**OLDENBURG ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE INDIANA 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 Curtis Eckstein of Oldenburg Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Eckstein is the first Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Oldenburg 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 Eckstein as Indiana'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, Eckstein 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 6-foot-3, 150-pound senior raced to the individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:13.3. Eckstein also won the St. Xavier Invitational, the Columbus North Invitational, the Rushville Invitational and the Semi-State, Regional and Sectional championships. He placed 11th at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships.

Eckstein has volunteered locally on behalf of his church youth group and the Boy Scouts of America. "Curt makes running look absolutely effortless," said Oldenburg coach Merle Hines. "He's a cross country phenom, but his most outstanding characteristic is his character."

Eckstein has maintained a weighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Purdue University 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.

Eckstein joins Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Ben Veatch (2015-16 & 2014-15, Carmel High School), Jackson Bertoli (2013-14, Terre Haute South Vigo High School), Connor Sorrells (2012-13, Barr-Reeve High School), Futsum Zeinasellassie (2011-12 & 2010-11, North Central High School), Tyler Byrne (2009-10, North Harrison High School), Drew Shields (2008-09, Fishers High School), and Mike Fout (2007-08, LaPorte High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Eckstein 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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