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**OCEAN TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 30, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Elliot Gindi of Ocean Township High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gindi is the first Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Ocean Township 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 Gindi as New Jersey'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, Gindi 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-1, 160-pound senior raced to the state Meet of Champions individual title this past season with a time of 15:45. Gindi also won the Group 3 state championship in 15:27, and captured victories at the Shore Conference championships, the Monmouth County championships and the Bowdoin Classic. He placed fourth at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and finished 31st nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Gindi has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and youth running programs. "Elliot is just an amazing competitor," said Ocean Township coach Mark DeSomma. "The bigger the race and the bigger the challenge, the more he's motivated to bigger achievements. He has a great gift and there are no limits to where he can go from here."

Gindi has maintained a B average in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Gindi joins Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Joshua Clark (2015-16, Highland Regional High School), Nikhil Pulimood (2014-15, West Windsor-Plainsboro South High School), Mike McClemens (2013-14, Christian Brothers Academy), Edward Cheserek (2012-13, St. Benedict's Prep.), Tim Ball (2011-12, Piscataway High School), Jim Rosa (2010-11 & 2009-10, West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North), Tyler Udland (2008-09, Millburn High School), and Brandon Jarrett (2007-08, St. Benedict's Prep.) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Gindi 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.

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