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**LAKOTA EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Dustin Horter of Lakota East High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Horter is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lakota East 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 Horter as Ohio'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, Horter 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, 145-pound junior won the Division I state meet this past season with a time of 15:02.8, breaking the tape 5.3 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Thunderhawks to a 15th-place finish as a team. Horter finished fourth at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in a school-record time of 14:59.90 and placed 30th at the NXN Final. He is a three-time First Team All-State selection and the two-time Cincinnati Enquirer Cross Country Runner of the Year.

A member of the Student Athletic Leadership Team at Lakota East, Horter has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. He also served as part of mission trips to Eastern Kentucky and inner-city Cincinnati. "Dustin was by far the most dominant runner in the state all year," said David Fultz, head coach of Middletown High. "He attacks every race and runs hard no matter if it's a small meet or the national meet."

Hortor has maintained a weighted 4.15 GPA in the classroom. He 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 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.

Hortor joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Andrew Jordan (2015-16, Watkins Memorial High School), Michael Vitucci (2014-15, St. Xavier High School), Mark Hadley (2013-14, Boardman High School), Sam Wharton (2012-13, Tippecanoe High School), Sam Praker (2011-12, Versailles High School), Michael Brajdic (2010-11, Bay High School), Zach Wills (2009-10 & 2008-09, Mason High School), and Donny Roys (2007-08, Medina High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Horter 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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