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**LA SALLE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 D.J. Principe of La Salle Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Principe is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from La Salle 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 Principe as Rhode Island'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, Principe 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 two-time returning Gatorade State Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-11, 140-pound senior won his third-straight state meet this past season with a time of 14:56.09, breaking the tape 57.83 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Rams to a first-place finish as a team. Principe was the winner at the Nike Cross Nationals Northeast Regional championships, qualifying for a third trip to the NXN Final, where he placed 21st to earn Third-Team All-American honors. A four-time Junior Olympic All-American, he won the 2016 New England Cross Country Championships and was undefeated against in-state competition.

In addition to volunteering at multiple area road races, Principe has participated in food drives for the needy on behalf of his church and as a mentor to prospective La Salle students. "In my estimation, D.J. is without a doubt the greatest cross country runner ever to come out of the state of Rhode Island," said Jim Doyle, head coach of Bishop Hendricken High. "He has taken the bar of greatness to an all-time high through his years of continued dedication and commitment."

Principe has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Stanford 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.

Three-time winner Principe joins Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Colin Tierney (2013-14, Bishop Hendricken High School), Trevor Crawley (2012-13, Cumberland High School), Mike Marsella (2011-12, Chariho High School), Ryan Meehan (2010-11, Bishop Hendricken High School), Jake Sienko (2009-10, Bishop Hendricken High School), Andrew Springer (2008-09, Westerly High School), and Nick Ross (2007-08, East Greenwich High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Principe 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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