

TUPELO CHRISTIAN PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 11, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Brock Kelly of Tupelo Christian Preparatory School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Kelly is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Tupelo Christian Preparatory 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 field, distinguishes Kelly as Mississippi'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 February, Kelly joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park High School, Ill.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-10, 140-pound junior won the MHSAA 1A individual state championship this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 16:33.50 and leading the Eagles to a first-place finish as a team. Kelly clocked the fastest all-class time at the state meet and was unbeaten by a Mississippi runner all season. He won seven of 10 races during the 2018 campaign, including his last six in a row, and was the state's top finisher at the Chickasaw Trails Invitational Small School division (2nd—16:54.43) and the Saltillo Invitational 1-3A race (2nd—16:16.20).

Kelly is active in his youth group at First United Methodist of Tupelo, where he volunteers at the Helping Hands Ministry, which helps provide food and clothing for the needy. An Eagle Scout candidate, he has also donated his time to Habitat for Humanity, Eight Days of Hope, Stop Hunger Now and Relay for Life. On an annual basis beginning in 2015, Kelly has raised money for St. Jude by running the Disney Half Marathon in honor of local children battling cancer, collecting \$12,000 for the cause in the four years he has run the race. "Brock has been a leader of our cross country and track teams since the 7th grade," said Tupelo Christian head coach Greg Warnick. "He's accomplished a lot and still has his senior season to improve. He has a great work ethic, putting in 50 to 70 miles per week in training, and sets a great example for the rest of his teammates."

Kelly has maintained a 4.08 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Kelly joins Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Dylan Allen (2017-18, Mooreville High School), Giacomo DeLuca III (2016-17, George County High School), David Patton Little (2015-16, Starkville High School), and Curt Knight (2014-15 & 2013-14, Jackson Academy) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Kelly has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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