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**PADUA ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE DELAWARE GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 29, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Lydia Olivere of Padua Academy as its 2017-18 Gatorade Delaware Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Olivere was the first Gatorade Delaware Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Padua Academy when she first won the honor her freshman year (2014-15). Her 2017-18 award his her fourth consecutive title.

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 Olivere as Delaware's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Olivere 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.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-5 senior raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:46, leading the Pandas to the state title as a team. Olivere won the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championship in 17:21.5 and placed 26th nationally at the NXN Final. She becomes one of only 12 girls in the Gatorade award program's 33-year history to capture State Runner of the Year four times.

Olivere has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track meets and the Mary Campbell Center for people with disabilities. "Lydia will leave Padua as the most accomplished distance runner to ever come through the program," said Padua coach Marnie Giunta. "She's been an incredible leader in her actions both on and off the course and selflessly always put her team first."

Olivere has maintained a 3.92 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Villanova 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.

Four-time winner Olivere stands with Gatorade Delaware Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Louisa Belk (2013-14, Saint Andrew's School), Reagan Anderson (2012-13, The Tatnall School), Haley Pierce (2011-12, 2010-11 & 2009-10, The Tatnall School), and Juliet Bottorff (2008-09 & 2007-08, The Tatnall School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Olivere 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 the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.