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**FAIRFIELD COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CONNECTICUT BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 12, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Drew Thompson of Fairfield College Preparatory School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Connecticut Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thompson is the second Gatorade Connecticut Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Fairfield College 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 Thompson as Connecticut'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, Thompson 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, 155-pound senior raced to State Open championship this past season with a time of 15:44. Thompson finished eighth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, earning All-American status. He also won the New England Cross Country Championships title in 15:16.7, the Class LL state championships in 15:40, the Woods Trail Run and the Wilton Invitational. Thompson took seventh at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships.

Thompson has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, homeless shelters and charity road races. "Drew Thompson is one of the toughest runners I've ever coached," said Fairfield Prep coach Bob Ford Jr. "He never has a bad race because he never gives up. He doesn't think about gimmicks to win, he just goes hard and dares anyone to stay with him."

Thompson has maintained a 3.84 GPA in the classroom. He will attend Dartmouth College this fall, where he will compete in cross country and track and field.

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.

Thompson joins Gatorade Connecticut Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Zakeer Ahmad (2016-17, Staples High School), Eric van der Els (2015-16, Brien McMahon High School), Alex Ostberg (2014-15 & 2013-14, Darien High School), Henry Wynne (2012-13, Staples High School), Connor Rog (2011-12 & 2010-11, Fairfield College Preparatory School), John Raneri (2009-10 & 2008-09, New Fairfield), and Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Thompson 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/>.

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