

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)

**BISHOP KELLY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE IDAHO BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 12, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Nicholas Russell of Bishop Kelly High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Idaho Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Russell is the first Gatorade Idaho Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bishop Kelly 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 field, distinguishes Russell as Idaho'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, Russell 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 junior won the Class 4A state meet for a second straight year this past season with a time of 15:37.65, breaking the tape 12.91 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Knights to a ninth-place finish as a team. Russell earned Third Team All-American status by placing 16th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final with a time of 15:32.3 after finishing fifth at the NXN Northwest Regional championships.

A self-taught guitarist who has performed at community meals for the homeless, Russell has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit The Friendship Foundation, a charity that provides financial assistance to children at St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute in Boise. He has also donated his time to community beautification projects and on behalf of numerous road races. "Nick is so strong mentally, when it comes down to the last part of a race he just refuses to lose," said Robert Thomas, head coach of Vallivue High. "He had a great season."

Russell has maintained a 4.0 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.

Russell joins Gatorade Idaho Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Austin Byrer (2016-17, Lewiston High School), Austin Stewart (2015-16, Shelley High School), Elijah Armstrong (2014-15, 2013-14 & 2012-13, Pocatello High School), Dallin Farnsworth (2011-12 & 2010-11, Highland High School), Cody Helbling (2009-10, Lake City), Barak Watson (2008-09, Columbia), and Eric Fitzpatrick (2007-08, Boise) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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

###