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**BLUE SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Victor Mugeche of Blue Springs High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Mugeche is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Blue Springs 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 Mugeche as Missouri'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, Mugeche 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, 148-pound senior won the MSHSAA Class 4 State XC Championships with a time of 15:29.13, leading the Wildcats the program's first state title as a team since 1982. Undefeated against in-state competition in 2017, Mugeche also took 10th at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:31.20 to earn Second Team All-Region honors. He finished 14th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 15:28.90. The Greater Kansas City Cross Country Coaches Association 2017 "Top Performer" and a three-time All-State selection, he clocked the state's fastest 5K by a prep boy in 2017 (15:11.20) and was Missouri's highest finisher at either the NXN or Foot Locker regionals.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at his school, Mugeche has volunteered locally on behalf of St. Mary's nursing home and also participates in Character Builders, a school-sponsored program that facilitates mentoring and community-building between Blue Springs students and area middle school pupils. "Victor set five course records on the season and won two, major Midwest meets," said Blue Springs head coach Frank Gallick. "His individual accomplishments led the team to one of its most successful seasons in program history. He just kept improving every season to become the excellent runner he is today. And even with everything Victor has done, he is still a humble and modest guy."

Mugeche has maintained a weighted 3.69 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Missouri 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.

Mugeche joins Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Austin Hindman (2016-17, Lafayette High School), Ben Naeger (2015-16, Ste. Genevieve High School), Michael Karls (2014-15, Festus High School), Noah Kauppila (2013-14, Marquette High School), Simon Belete (2012-13, Blue Springs High School), Zach Herriott (2011-12 & 2010-11, Rockhurst High School), Maksim Korolev (2009-10, Harrisonville High School), Kevin Colon (2008-09, Lee's Summit West High School), and Eric Fernandez (2007-08, Parkway West High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Mugeche 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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