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**NESHAMINY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE PENNSYLVANIA 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 Rusty Kujdych of Neshaminy High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Kujdych is the first Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Neshaminy 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 Kujdych as Pennsylvania'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, Kujdych 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 5-foot-9, 145-pound senior raced to the Class AAA individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:47. Kujdych also won the PIAA Foundation Invitational, the Briarwood Invitational and the District 1 championships. He took eighth at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and finished 23rd at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Also a talented musician, Kujdych has served as a mentor for young children and has raised money to benefit families in war-torn Ukraine. "Our school has never produced a distance runner of Rusty's caliber," said Neshaminy coach Syd White. "He's developed into one of the top runners in the country, but he's an even better student and teammate. What sets him apart is his daily mission to make not only himself but his teammates better runners."

Kujdych has maintained a weighted 4.12 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Georgetown 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.

Kujdych joins Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Noah Affolder (2016-17, Carlisle High School), Jake Brophy (2015-16 & 2014-15, Central Bucks East High School), Tony Russell (2013-14, Henderson High School), Brendan Shearn (2012-13, North Schuylkill High School), Dustin Wilson (2011-12, Chestnut Hill Academy), Zach Hedba (2010-11, North Hills Senior High School), Brad Miles (2009-10, North Penn High School), Ben Furcht (2008-09, Lower Merion High School), and Mark Dennin (2007-08, Boyertown Area Senior High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kujdych 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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