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**U-32 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Stephen Looke of U-32 High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Looke is the first Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from U-32 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 Looke as Vermont'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, Looke 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-8 130-pound senior raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:51.9, leading the Raiders to the state title as a team. The Times Argus Runner of the Year, Looke took second at the Essex Invitational, third at the Woods Trail Run and third at the Varsity C race of the Manhattan Invitational. He also finished 25th at the New England Cross Country Championships, leading U-32 to a 10th place as a team.

Also a talented musician and President of the Student Council, Looke has volunteered locally on behalf of a soup kitchen. "Stephen is quiet, but he will cut your heart out in the last 200 meters of a race," said U-32 coach Andrew Tripp. "Then he'll turn around and hug you after crossing the finish line. He's been a contributing member to five state championship teams, but he never brags or boasts. He's the classiest champion I've ever encountered."

Looke has maintained a 3.50 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Looke joins Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Tyler Marshall (2016-17, Champlain Valley Union High School), Matt Hynes (2015-16, Montpelier High School), Sam Nishi (2014-15 & 2013-14, Harwood Union High School), Daniel Grosvenor (2012-13, Montpelier High School), Malcolm Plunkett (2011-12, South Burlington High School), Brendan Copley (2010-11, Colchester High School), David Sinclair (2009-10, Green Mountain Valley School), Adron Pitmon (2008-09, Mt. Mansfield Union High School), and Kyle Powers (2007-08, St. Johnsbury Academy) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Looke 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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