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**WOODROW WILSON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Chris Barbera of Woodrow Wilson High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Barbera is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Woodrow Wilson 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 Barbera as West Virginia'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, Barbera 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, 150-pound junior won the Group AAA state meet this past season with a time of 15:38.1, breaking the tape 15.61 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Flying Eagles to a third-place finish as a team. Barbera won six of seven races on the season, earning invitational titles in Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia. He also set two course records, including his time of 15:55 on his home course at the Group AAA, Region III championships.

Barbera has volunteered locally with the Mac Toy Fund, which provides Christmas gifts to children in need. He has also donated his time as a youth track coach and mentor. "I have witnessed Chris battle back and forth in some tough races," said Mike Ryan, head coach of Morgantown High. "He is mentally a strong runner with the maturity to stay focused on his race strategy and not let the emotions of the moment get the best of him."

Barbera has maintained a 3.63 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.

Barbera joins Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Philip White (2016-17, University High School), Seth Edwards (2015-16 & 2014-15, University High School), Matthew Brafford (2013-14, George Washington High School), Jacob Burcham (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Cabell Midland High School), Cody Pelliccioni (2009-10 & 2008-09, Morgantown High School), and Ryan Beabout (2007-08, Wheeling Park High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Barbera 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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