

**BROOKINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 28, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Ellie Abraham of Brookings High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Abraham is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Brookings 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 racecourse, distinguishes Abraham as South Dakota's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Abraham joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg High School, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-5 junior placed second at the Class AA state meet this past season—running the last 2.5 miles with just one shoe to finish with a season-best time of 18:18.27 and leading the Bobcats to an eighth-place finish as a team in the process. Abraham, who also won the state title as an eighth-grader and as a sophomore, is a five-time First Team All-State selection. Including track and field, Abraham is a six-time state champion and has finished in the top eight 20 times across fall and spring state meet competition.

A member of the All-State choir as well as the Brookings High marching band, concert band and jazz band, Abraham has volunteered locally with Habitat for Humanity and as a youth soccer referee. "Ellie is definitely a hard worker, and her performances though the season were a testament to that," said Angie Thomas, head coach of Huron High. "She lets her running do the talking for her. She is a very humble competitor."

Abraham has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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.

Two-time winner Abraham joins Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Laura Nelson (2016-17, Gayville-Volin High School), Ella Byers (2015-16, Chamberlain High School), Emily Hawkes (2014-15, Madison High School), and Tamara Gorman (2013-14, Stevens High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Abraham has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.