

VALOR CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE COLORADO BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 11, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Cole Sprout of Valor Christian High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Sprout is the first Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Valor Christian 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 Sprout as Colorado’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 February, Sprout joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park High School, Ill.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-8, 130-pound junior raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 15:16.1. The state’s returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Sprout won the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships with a time of 14:39.1, and crossed the line third at the national NXN Final, earning All-American honors. He also broke the tape at the Liberty Bell Invitational, the Region 2 championships and the Desert Twilight Festival.

Sprout has volunteered locally on behalf of a soup kitchen and Operation Christmas Child, and has participated in a mission trip to a Mexican orphanage. “Cole is the grittiest athlete I’ve ever coached,” said Valor Christian coach Greg Coplen. “He has incredible self-discipline and a strong faith.”

Sprout has maintained a 3.98 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Two-time winner Sprout joins Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Cole Tanner Norman (2016-17, The Classical Academy), Paul Roberts (2015-16, Lyons High School), Eric Hamer (2014-15, Palmer Ridge High School), and Zach Alhamra (2013-14, Pine Creek 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,” Sprout has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He 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.

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