

ABERDEEN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Aaron Ryan of Aberdeen Central High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Ryan is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Aberdeen Central 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 Ryan as South Dakota'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, Ryan joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg High School, 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-11, 150-pound junior won the Class AA state meet this past season with a time of 15:31.73, breaking the tape 3.73 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Golden Eagles to a third-place finish as a team. Ryan broke the tape despite falling less than 500 meters from the finish line. A three-year All-State selection, he won seven of eight races during the 2018 campaign.

Ryan has volunteered locally as a youth mentor and track coach, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Aaron commanded the state race from start to finish and I thought executed a brilliant race strategy," said Shane Reilly, head coach of Washington High. "Aaron is a powerful runner and a fierce competitor."

Ryan has maintained a 3.15 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.

Ryan joins Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Derick Peters (2017-18, & 2016-17 West Central High School), Gabe Peters (2015-16, Lincoln High School), Will Lauer (2014-15, Lincoln High School), and Addison DeHaven (2013-14, Brookings 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," Ryan 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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