

ALEDO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE TEXAS 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 **Graydon Morris of Aledo High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Morris is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Aledo 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 Morris as Texas' 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, Morris 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 High School, Ill.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 6-foot-3, 145-pound junior raced to his second consecutive Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:04. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Morris crossed the line third at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 15:25.1, earning All-American honors, and took eighth at the Foot Locker South Regional championships. He also posted victories at the District 4 championships, the Region 1 championships, the Marcus 1 Invitational and the Cowtown Challenge.

Morris has volunteered locally on behalf of an animal shelter, and has collected athletic equipment for underprivileged Kenyan athletes. "Graydon is an extraordinary runner and person," said Aledo coach Mike Pinkerton. "He's a truly selfless individual—he's not one to shy away from a challenge, but he'd rather put the spotlight on others rather than himself."

Morris has maintained a 3.82 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 Morris joins Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Reed Brown (2016-17 & 2015-16, Carroll Senior High School), Carter Blunt (2014-15, Independence High School), and Frank Lara (2013-14, Strake Jesuit College Preparatory) 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," Morris 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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