

**PINECREST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 27, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Carmen Alder of Pinecrest High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Alder is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Pinecrest 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 Alder as North Carolina'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, Alder 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-7 junior distance talent won the NCHSAA Class 4A state title this past season, breaking the tape in 17:58.84—26.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor—and leading the Patriots to a fourth-place finish as a team. Alder also won the adidas XC Challenge Girls Championship race in 17:36.10, and was the top North Carolina performer at the prestigious Great American XC Festival's Race of Champions, crossing the line sixth in 17:39.30. She capped her season by winning the AAU National Championship with a time of 18:34.35 and was victorious in 11 of 13 races she entered last fall.

Alder has volunteered locally for a youth running team and has donated her time to the Special Olympics of Moore County. "Carmen is the total package: student-athlete, role model and leader," said Pinecrest head coach John Bucholtz. "She didn't lose a race to a runner from North Carolina during the 2019 NCHSAA campaign and she is the ultimate team player. She tries to encourage her teammates to be the best they can be, and the team has not lost a conference meet in her career."

Alder has maintained a 3.63 weighted 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 and 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 Alder joins Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Mariah Howlett (2017-18, Lake Norman Charter School), Nevada Mareno (2016-17 & 2015-16, Leesville Road High School) and Elly Henes (2014-15, Green Hope High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Alder 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).