

**PANTHER CREEK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 10, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Ian Harrison of Panther Creek High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Harrison is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Panther Creek 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 Harrison as North Carolina'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, Harrison 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 6-foot-3, 150-pound senior distance talent won the NCHSAA Class 4A state title this past season, breaking the tape in 15:25.58 and leading the Catamounts to a fifth-place finish as a team. A two-time All-State selection and the Tri-8 XC Runner of the Year, Harrison clocked a personal-best 15:05.90 to finish fourth at the NXN Southeast Regional championship to qualify for the national NXN Final, where he crossed the line 83rd with a time of 16:08.80. He also took ninth in the prestigious Great American XC Festival Race of Champions in addition to setting a Carolina Horse Park record (15:55.96) to win the NCHSAA 4A Mideast Regional Meet.

A member of the Catamount LEAD club, Harrison has volunteered locally on behalf of the American Tobacco Trail Clean-up initiative and has donated his time to the American Tobacco Trail marathon. "Ian is the most dedicated distance runner I have ever coached," said Paul Scruggs, head coach at Panther Creek High. "He is a high-mileage athlete who really bought in to everything we do and led the push among our boys team to keep each other accountable in dietary and sleeping habits. He has achieved great things as a runner due to hard work and perseverance."

Harrison has maintained a weighted 4.27 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at North Carolina State University 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.

Harrison joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Anton Idhammar (2018-19, Cary High School), John Tatter (2017-18, R.J. Reynolds High School), Connor Lane (2016-17, Cardinal Gibbons High School), and Jeremy Brown (2015-16 & 2014-15, Broughton High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Harrison 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.