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BLUE SPRINGS SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSOURI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 23, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Tori Findley of Blue Springs South High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Findley is the second Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Blue Springs South 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 racecourse, distinguishes Findley as Missouri'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 January/February, Findley joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Prep., San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-6 junior crossed the line in 14th place at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships this past season with a time of 17:56.60 to earn Second Team All-Region honors. Findley also clocked the fastest 5K of a Missouri prep girl last fall with her winning time of 17:33.09 at the prestigious Chile Pepper Cross Country Festival in Arkansas, which anchored the Jaguars' bronze medal finish in the event. The Kansas City Metro Runner of the Year as named by the Greater KC XC Coaches Association, she also took silver at the MSHSAA Class 4 state meet with a time of 18:27.62, leading her team to a fifth-place finish. Findley won five of eight races this past fall along with three runner-up performances and went 92-1 when facing 2016 All-State honorees across all classes.

A two-year member of her school's Health Occupation Services Association and a three-year member of the foreign language club, Findley serves as a BSS Student Ambassador in addition to donating her time as a peer tutor as well as the St. Robert Bellarmine Youth Group. She has also volunteered locally on behalf of the Harvesters Community Food Network and a variety of youth sports camps. "Tori is very competitive and fearless in the way she approaches training and with how hard she competes," said Jesse Griffin, head coach at Lee's Summit West High. "Through hard work and commitment, she is one of the best runners in the state of Missouri and the Midwest. Beyond the results of each competition, she also shows qualities of any leader by the sportsmanship and respect she shows to her competitors."

Findley has maintained a 4.0 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 & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Findley joins Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Taylor Werner (2015-16, 2013-14 & 2012-13, Ste. Genevieve High School), Hannah Long (2014-15, Eureka High School), Samantha Nightingale (2011-12, Blue Springs South High School), Colleen Quigley (2010-11, Nerinx Hall High School), Emily Sisson (2009-10 2008-09, Parkway Central High School), and Diane Robison (2007-08, Parkway Central High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Findley will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

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