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**BILLINGS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Tiahna Vladic of Billings Senior High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Vladic is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Billings Senior 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 Vladic as Montana'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, Vladic 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-4 sophomore won the Class AA state meet this past season with a time of 16:40.74, breaking the tape 10.64 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Broncs to a second-place finish as a team. Vladic also placed fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships and finished 21st at the NXN Final, falling short of All-American honors by just 0.1 seconds. She is a two-time Class AA All-State selection.

Vladic has volunteered locally at the Montana Marathon and as a youth running coach. "Tiahna is an extremely hard-working and dedicated runner," said Sarah Lord, head coach of Billings Senior High. "She works to her fullest potential every day and never shies away from workouts or races that seem too daunting."

Vladic has maintained a weighted 3.75 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior 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.

Vladic joins Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Annie Hill (2015-16, Glacier High School), Makena Morley (2014-15, 2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12), Bigfork High School), Caroline Hardin (2010-11, Bozeman High School), and Heidi Turner (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Bozeman High School), as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Vladic 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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