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**HILLIARD DAVIDSON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OHIO 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 India Johnson of Hilliard Davidson High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Johnson is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Hilliard Davidson 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 Johnson as Ohio'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, Johnson 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-1 senior placed fourth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships and ninth at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, earning All-American honors at both events. Johnson also won the Division I state meet with a course-record time of 17:28.6, breaking the tape 7.1 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Wildcats to a 14th-place finish as a team. She is the first Ohioan to qualify for the FLCCC and NXN Final in the same year.

A member of the Central Ohio Student Athlete Leadership Committee, Johnson has volunteered locally as an elementary-school teacher's aide and as a youth running coach. "India Johnson had a fantastic season," said John Jarvis, head coach of Watkins Memorial High. "She was by far the top female runner in Ohio. She also showed herself to be one of the top females in the nation. She is well coached and has a great mixture of strength and speed. This allows her to adapt to various race scenarios as they take place."

Johnson has maintained a 3.24 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Michigan 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 & 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.

Johnson joins Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Abby Nichols (2015-16, Alter High School), Dominique Clairmonte (2014-15, Lexington High School), Annie Heffernan (2013-14, St. Ursula Academy), Mary Kate Vaughn (2012-13, Oakwood High School), Claudia Saunders (2011-12, Princeton High School), Michelle Thomas (2010-11, Glen Este High School), Madeline Chambers (2009-10, Magnificat High School), Stephanie Morgan (2008-09, Barnesville High School), and Claire Durkin (2007-08, Worthington Kilbourne High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Johnson 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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