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**WILTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 29, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Morgan McCormick of Wilton High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. McCormick was the second Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Wilton High School when she won the honor her junior year (2016-17).

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 McCormick as Connecticut'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, McCormick 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-3 senior raced to the State Open championship this past season with a time of 18:23. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, McCormick won the Class L state title in 18:19 and took fourth at the New England Cross Country Championships. She also finished fourth at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and crossed the line in 17th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

A chemistry tutor in her school, McCormick has volunteered locally on behalf of the Tails of Courage animal shelter. "Morgan raised the level of her running considerably over last year, and the results reflected it," said Wilton coach Jeff Gee. "She's an extremely dedicated and hard worker who has pushed herself tirelessly. The fact that she's only been running for a little more than two years bodes well for her future."

McCormick has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom.

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.

Two-time winner McCormick stands with Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Morgan McCormick (2016-17, Wilton High School), Hannah DeBalsi (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Staples High School), Brianna Lenehan (2012-13, Norwich Free Academy), Reid Watson (2011-12, Glastonbury High School), Jackie Nicholas (2010-11, Nonnewaug High School), Lauren Sara (2009-10, Frank Scott Bunnell), Moira Kenny (2008-09, Immaculate High School), and Heather Stephens (2007-08, Ridgefield) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, McCormick 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 the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.