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**CHILES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 Ana Wallace of Chiles High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Wallace is the first Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Chiles 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 Wallace as Florida'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, Wallace 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-7 senior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:43.42. Wallace took third at the Foot Locker South Regional championships and crossed the line in sixth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, earning All-American status. She also broke the tape at the Big Bend Invitational, the Region 1 championships and the Buffalo Invitational, while placing second at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival.

A student ambassador at her school, Wallace has volunteered locally on behalf of community clean-up initiatives and youth track programs. "Ana is one of the hardest workers I have ever coached in my many years in the sport," said Chiles coach Mike Phillips. "She's a relentless trainer, an exceptional leader and she does everything right."

Wallace has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Wallace joins Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Bailey Hertenstein (2016-17 & 2015-16, Riverview High School), Rafaella Gibbons (2014-15, Winter Park High School), Emily Edwards (2013-14, Fort Myers High School), Bridget Blake (2012-13, Dr. Phillips High School), Olivia Ortiz (2011-12, Lakewood Ranch High School), Kathryn Fluehr (2010-11 & 2009-10, The Community School of Naples), and Ashley Brasovan (2008-09 & 2007-08, Wellington High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Wallace 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/>.