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**GLENBARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 Katelynn Hart of Glenbard West High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hart is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Glenbard West 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 Hart as Illinois' 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, Hart 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 sophomore raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:22. Hart was the only runner in the country to place in the top five at both national championship races, taking second at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 17:22.5, and finishing fourth at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 17:41.6, earning All-American honors at both events. She also broke the tape at the NXN Midwest Regional championships (17:28.6) and took second at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships.

Hart has volunteered locally on behalf of the Mawi Learning leadership group. "Katelynn has been blessed with incredible God-given talent, but her success as a runner can be directly attributed to her amazing work ethic," said Glenbard West coach Paul Hass. "She is extremely self-disciplined and she knows what it takes to achieve her best and to compete against the best."

Hart has maintained a 4.77 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.

Hart joins Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anna Sophia Keller (2016-17, St. Anthony High School), Judy Pendergast (2015-16, Naperville North High School), Maryjeanne Gilbert (2014-15, Peoria Notre Dame High School), Anna Sophia Keller (2013-14, St. Anthony High School), Courtney Ackerman (2012-13, New Trier High School), Amanda Fox (2011-12, Naperville Central High School), Kayla Beattie (2010-11, Woodstock High School), Lavinia Jurkiewicz (2009-10, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School), Lindsay Flanagan (2008-09, Lake Park High School), and Kristin Sutherland (2007-08, Carl Sandburg High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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

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