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**FALMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE 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 Sofie Matson of Falmouth High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Matson is the first Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Falmouth 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 Matson as Maine'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, Matson 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-9 freshman won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 18:41.6, breaking the tape 36.68 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Yachtsmen to a third-place finish as a team. A Maine Track and Cross Country Coaches Association All-State selection, Matson won the Maine Cross Country Festival of Champions and finished 14th at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships. She won six of eight races, setting four courses records along the way, and was unbeaten against in-state opponents throughout the 2017 campaign.

An accomplished clarinetist, Matson has performed with the Portland Youth Wind Ensemble and the Portland Youth Symphony Orchestra. She is a member of the Falmouth High debate team and contributes to the school paper. "The fact that Sofie is a freshman only makes her accomplishments more notable," said David Dowling, head coach of Greeley High. "She was able to dominate on flat and hilly courses, which demonstrates her overall strength and preparedness."

Matson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

Matson joins Gatorade Maine Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Abigail Hamilton (2016-17, Yarmouth High School), Tia Tardy (2015-16, Orono High School), Katherine Leggat-Barr (2014-15, Greely High School), Kirstin Sandreuter (2013-14, Greely High School), Bethanie Brown (2012-13, Waterville High School), Abbey Leonardi (2011-12, 2010-11, 2009-10 & 2008-09, Kennebunk High School), and Anna Makaretz (2007-08, Yarmouth High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Matson 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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