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**LANSING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 Olivia Theis of Lansing Catholic High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Theis is the first Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lansing Catholic 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 Theis as Michigan'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, Theis 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-6 senior raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a meet-record time of 16:52.1, leading the Cougars to the state title as a team. Theis won the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships with a time of 17:13.4 and took third at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, earning All-American status. She also broke the tape at the Portage Invitational and the Spartan Invitational.

A devoted member of her church community, Theis has volunteered locally as both a student ambassador and a peer assistance leader at her school. "Going into her senior season, one of the things I looked for was how she would respond to being the favorite at virtually all her meets," said Lansing Catholic coach Tim Simpson. "She not only stepped up to the challenge, she far exceeded expectations. She set records on courses that have had the best runners in the history of Michigan run on them."

Theis has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Theis joins Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anne Forsyth (2016-17, Pioneer High School), Madison Troy (2015-16, Grandville High School), Audrey Belf (2014-15, Seaholm High School), Kirsten Olling (2013-14, Breckenridge High School), Julia Bos (2012-13, Grand Rapids Christian High School), Erin Finn (2011-12, West Bloomfield High School), Gabrielle Anzalone (2010-11, Grand Blanc High School), Megan Goethals (2009-10 & 2008-09, Rochester High School), and Katie Haines (2007-08, Rockford High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Theis 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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