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**BLUE SPRINGS SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Tori Findley of Blue Springs South High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Findley is the second Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Blue Springs South 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 Findley as Missouri'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, Findley 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 state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-6 senior took seventh place at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships this past season, earning First Team All-Region honors with a time of 17:49.60. Undeclared against in-state competition in 2017, Findley broke the tape at the MSHSAA Class 4 State XC Championships with a time of 18:09.34, leading the Jaguars to fourth place as a team. The two-time KC Metro Runner of the Year and four-time All-State honoree won eight of nine races on the season, clocked the state's fastest 5K time by a prep girl and was Missouri's highest finisher at either the Foot Locker or NXN regional.

A member of the Student Athlete Leadership Council at her school, Findley has donated her time locally to the St. Robert Bellarmine Youth Group & Confirmation, Harvesters, the YMCA and the Special Olympics. A sales associate for Hallmark Cards, she has also volunteered as a peer tutor, a youth sports coach and on behalf of a 5K fundraiser in honor of a former coach. "Tori's consistency throughout the season was only magnified by her dominant run through district, sectional and state competition," said Erik Boal, editor of DyeStat.com. "She turned in an impressive performance at the NXN Midwest Regional, improving from last year's 14th-place finish to take seventh against one of the deepest fields in the country. Her back-to-back Gatorade selections puts her in a group with two of the state's all-time greats: Parkway Central's Emily Sisson and Ste. Genevieve's Taylor Werner."

Findley has maintained a weighted 4.17 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Missouri 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.

Two-time winner Findley joins Gatorade Missouri Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Taylor Werner (2015-16, 2013-14 & 2012-13, Ste. Genevieve High School), Hannah Long (2014-15, Eureka High School), Samantha Nightingale (2011-12, Blue Springs South High School), Colleen Quigley (2010-11, Nerinx Hall High School), Emily Sisson (2009-10 & 2008-09, Parkway Central High School), and Diane Robison (2007-08, Parkway Central High School) as athletes who have won the cross-country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Findley 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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