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**MILLARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Gabby McGinn of Millard West High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. McGinn is the first Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard 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 McGinn as Nebraska'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, McGinn 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 won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 18:49.6, breaking the tape 6.1 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Wildcats to their second straight state title as a team. McGinn also finished ninth at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, the top Nebraska runner in the race by more than 39 seconds. A three-time All-State selection, she owns the second-fastest 5K time in state history with her 17:30.47 clocking at NXN Heartland.

A member of her school's chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, McGinn has volunteered locally at the Methodist Women's Hospital in Omaha and as a middle-school math tutor. "Gabby's consistency week to week with very few off days really stands out in my mind," said Brian Kabourek, head coach of Lincoln East High. "She was highly competitive and demonstrated that against neighboring states as well."

McGinn has maintained a weighted 4.21 GPA in the classroom. She will attend Washington University in St. Louis, where she will run for the cross country and track teams, beginning 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.

McGinn joins Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Taylor Somers (2016-17 & 2015-16, Millard South High School), Jeralyn Poe (2014-15, 2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Lincoln North Star High School), Aubree Worden (2010-11 & 2009-10, Scottsbluff High School), Kelli Budd (2008-09, Marian High School), and Emily Sisson (2007-08, Millard North High School) as athletes who have won the cross-country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, McGinn 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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