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**SPANISH SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEVADA 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 Alexis Melendrez of Spanish Springs High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Melendrez is the first Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Spanish Springs 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 Melendrez as Nevada'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, Melendrez 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-4 senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:41. Melendrez also broke the tape at the Reed Invitational, the Douglas Class Races and the High Desert League meet, while finishing second at the Nevada Twilight Classic and fifth at the Clovis Invitational.

A devoted member of her church community, Melendrez is co-founder of Kids on Track, a youth running camp. "It's been so rewarding to watch Alexis go from her freshman year, when she didn't even have the confidence to train with our varsity girls, to the state meet of her senior season, where she left every varsity girl in Nevada far behind," said Spanish Springs coach Rhonda Beadell. "I've never met an athlete more focused and goal-oriented."

Melendrez has maintained a weighted 4.21 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 Nevada 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.

Melendrez joins Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Samantha King-Shaw (2016-17, Reed High School), Alexis Gourrier (2015-16, Centennial High School), Skyler Flora (2014-15, Tahoe Truckee High School), Sydney Badger (2013-14 & 2012-13, Centennial High School), Mary Jo Wright (2011-12, Elko High School), Katie Gorczyca (2010-11, Palo Verde High School), and Kelsey Smith (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, South Tahoe High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Melendrez 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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