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**TROY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OHIO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 29, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Morgan Gigandet of Troy High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gigandet is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Troy 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 Gigandet as Ohio'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, Gigandet 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 won the Division I state meet this past season with a time of 17:30.8, breaking the tape 1.7 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Trojans to a 13th-place finish as a team. Gigandet earned Third Team All-American honors by placing 20th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final after taking sixth at the NXN Midwest Regional championships. She won eight of 10 races on the season.

Gigandet has volunteered locally at a nature preserve and she has donated her time on behalf of multiple road races. "Morgan is the most dedicated athlete I have coached in my 18 years of coaching cross country," said Kevin Alexander, head coach of Troy High. "She is willing to practice at 5 a.m. or 5 p.m. She is a true student of the sport."

Gigandet has maintained a 3.67 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Gigandet joins Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year India Johnson (2016-17, Hilliard Davidson High School), Abby Nichols (2015-16, Alter High School), Dominique Clairmonte (2014-15, Lexington High School), Annie Heffernan (2013-14, St. Ursula Academy), Mary Kate Vaughn (2012-13, Oakwood High School), Claudia Saunders (2011-12, Princeton High School), Michelle Thomas (2010-11, Glen Este High School), Madeline Chambers (2009-10, Magnificat High School), Stephanie Morgan (2008-09, Barnesville High School), and Claire Durkin (2007-08, Worthington Kilbourne High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Gigandet 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/>.