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**BARTLESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Rilee Rigdon of Bartlesville High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Rigdon is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bartlesville 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 Rigdon as Oklahoma'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, Rigdon 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-5 senior won the Class 6A state meet title this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 18:15.81 to finish 15.74 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and lead the Bruins to a second-place finish as a team. Rigdon won seven of eight races on the season and was unbeaten against in-state competition. A three-time First Team All-State selection, she's been a two-time finalist for the Tulsa World's Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year.

A violinist in the Bartlesville High school orchestra, Rigdon has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank. She has also donated her time as an elementary school tutor and a youth running coach. "Rilee was by far the best runner in the state of Oklahoma this fall," said David Riden, head coach of Deer Creek High. "I never saw her seriously challenged by anyone from our state."

Rigdon has maintained a 3.66 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Oklahoma State University 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.

Rigdon joins Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Cheyenne Walden (2016-17, 2015-16 & 2014-15, Charles Page High School), Alex Davis (2012-13 & 2011-12, Plainview High School), Noemi Hernandez (2010-11, Westmoore High School), Jori Davis (2009-10, Piedmont High School), Andrea Lewis (2008-09, Bishop Kelley), and Sara Vaughn (2007-08, Union) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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