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**BROOKINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Ellie Abraham of Brookings High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Abraham is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Brookings 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 Abraham as South Dakota'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, Abraham 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 sophomore won the Class AA state meet this past season with a state-record time of 18:23.48, breaking the tape 16.24 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Bobcats to a 10th-place finish as a team. Abraham, who also won the state title as an eighth-grader, is a four-time First Team All-State selection, finishing fourth in 2014 and third in 2016 to go with her two championships.

A member of the all-state choir as well as the Brookings High marching band, concert band and jazz band, Abraham has volunteered locally with Habitat for Humanity and as a youth soccer referee. "What is so impressive with Ellie is that for only being a sophomore, she runs like a savvy veteran," said Jason Wagoner, head coach of Roosevelt High. "She is so physically strong that when she makes her move in a race, she makes it look effortless and it's decisive."

Abraham has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Abraham joins Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Laura Nelson (2016-17, Gayville-Volin High School), Ella Byers (2015-16, Chamberlain High School), Emily Hawkes (2014-15, Madison High School), Tamara Gorman (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2010-11, Stevens High School), Alex Hess (2011-12, Roosevelt High School), Madeleine Takahashi (2009-10, Sturgis Brown High School), Seanna Kautz (2008-09, Roosevelt High School), and Mariah Hofer (2007-08, Yankton High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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