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**DOBYNS-BENNETT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 Sasha Neglia of Dobyns-Bennett High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Neglia is the first Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Dobyns-Bennett 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 Neglia as Tennessee'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, Neglia 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-2 sophomore won the Division I Large School state meet this past season with a time of 18:15.71, breaking the tape 19.22 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Indians to a third-place finish as a team. Neglia also took second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships, qualifying for the NXN Final, where she finished 24th. She won eight of 11 races on the season.

A member of the Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society, Neglia has volunteered locally as a youth track and swimming coach. "Sasha runs determined and confident and has no fear of racing anyone regardless of what the outcome may be," said Len Jeffers, head coach of Daniel Boone High. "She is a very talented runner."

Neglia has maintained a weighted 4.45 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.

Neglia joins Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Rebecca Story (2016-17, Christian Academy of Knoxville), Taylor Cuneo (2015-16 & 2014-15, Central Magnet School), Bailee Dean (2013-14, Cane Ridge High School), Barbara Lee Ball (2012-13, Lipscomb Academy), Haley Ward (2011-12, McMinn County High School), Joanna Thompson (2010-11, Knoxville Catholic High School), Megan Ferowich (2009-10, Knoxville Catholic High School), and Kathy Kroeger (2008-09 & 2007-08, Independence High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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