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**MCKINNEY NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 London Culbreath of McKinney North High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Culbreath is the first Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from McKinney North 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 Culbreath as Texas' 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, Culbreath 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-3 sophomore raced to her second straight Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 16:56. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Culbreath won the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championships in 17:33.55 and finished 31st nationally at the NXN Final. She also earned victories at the Southlake Carroll Invitational, the Nike South Invitational and the Region 2 championships.

Culbreath has volunteered locally on behalf of an animal shelter, a retirement home, food banks and youth sports camps. "It's been incredible to coach London and watch her navigate through the challenges of being a high-profile athlete," said McKinney North coach Jessica Richards. "She handles it with such grace, and strives daily to be the best she can be."

Culbreath has maintained a 3.93 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.

Two-time winner Culbreath joins Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Abby Gray (2015-16, Alamo Heights High School), Paige Hofstad (2014-15, New Braunfels High School), Natalie Rathjen (2013-14, Highland Park High School), Karis Jochen (2012-13 & 2011-12, A&M Consolidated High School), Rachel Johnson (2010-11, Plano Senior High School), and Chelsey Sveinsson (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Greenhill School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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