GREEN MOUNTAIN VALLEY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VERMONT 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 Rena Schwartz of Green Mountain Valley School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Schwartz is the first Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Green Mountain Valley 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 Schwartz as Vermont'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, Schwartz 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-6 senior raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:59.6. The state's three-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year and a four-time state champion, Schwartz also won the South Burlington Class Races, the People's Academy Invitational and the Montpelier Invitational.

A talented Nordic skier and violinist, Schwartz has volunteered on behalf of environmental education initiatives and the Central Vermont Humane Society. "Rena is a driven individual who stands out as an outstanding student-athlete," said Green Mountain Valley coach Colin Rodgers. "Her focus is always on point."

Schwartz has maintained a 4.15 GPA in the classroom. She will attend Dartmouth College in the fall, where she will compete in Nordic skiing.

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.

Three –time winner Schwartz joins Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Sophia Gorman (2015-16, Champlain Valley Union High School), Autumn Eastman (2013-14, Champlain Valley Union High School), Elle Purrier (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Richford High School), Hannah Rowe (2009-10 & 2008-09, St. Johnsbury Academy), and Sarah Lange (2007-08, Brattleboro Union High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Schwartz 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/.

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