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**SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Olivia Beckner of South Lakes High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Beckner is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from South Lakes 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 Beckner as Virginia'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, Beckner 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-9 senior won the Class 6A state meet title this past season with a time of 18:12, breaking the tape six seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Seahawks to a sixth-place finish as a team. In only her second season of running cross country, Beckner won six of eight races and did not lose to an in-state opponent until the Foot Locker South Regional championships where she lost her footing at the one-mile mark while holding second place. She regained her feet and finished 24th.

Beckner has volunteered locally on behalf of numerous road races and she has donated her time as a youth track coach and mentor. "Olivia is a very strong runner, and her strength is probably her confidence," said Adam Daniels, head coach of Patriot High. "She's got great finishing speed and that's hard to coach."

Beckner has maintained a 3.35 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Syracuse 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.

Beckner joins Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Kate Murphy (2016-17, Lake Braddock High School), Weini Kelati (2015-16, Heritage High School), Libby Davidson (2014-15, E.C. Glass High School), Caroline Alcorta (2013-14, West Springfield High School), Sophie Chase (2012-13 & 2011-12, Lake Braddock High School), Annie LeHardy (2010-11, Hidden Valley High School), Kathleen Stevens (2009-10, Blacksburg High School), Megan Marsico (2008-09, Glenvar High School), and Kathleen Lautzenheiser (2007-08, Midlothian High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Beckner 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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