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**RAWLINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WYOMING 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 Sydney Thorvaldson of Rawlins High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thorvaldson is the first Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Rawlins 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 Thorvaldson as Wyoming'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, Thorvaldson 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, Nequa Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-2 freshman took ninth at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season with a time of 17:58.7 to earn Second Team All-American honors. Thorvaldson also captured the Class 3A state meet title in 17:49.31, breaking the tape more than two minutes ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Outlaws to a fourth-place finish as a team. She finished third at the NXN Northwest Regional championships and won nine of 11 races on the season.

Thorvaldson has volunteered locally as part of community beautification projects and has donated her time as a teacher's aide at her church. "Sydney's the best I've ever seen in person," said Scott Shaffer, head coach of Cody High. "I was clocking mile splits on a very hilly course at 8,000 feet [above sea level], and she comes blasting by in 5:10. Just crazy."

Thorvaldson has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

Thorvaldson joins Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anna Gibson (2016-17 & 2013-14, Jackson Hole High School), Calbi Ausmann (2015-16, Newcastle High School), Karli Piaia (2014-15, Rock Springs High School), Hailey Ricks (2012-13 & 2011-12, Star Valley High School), Jessica Lemaster (2010-11 & 2007-08, Cheyenne Central High School), Dana Morin (2009-10, Sheridan High School), and Nicole Peterson (2008-09, Rock Springs High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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