

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)**

**VALOR CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 12, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Cole Sprout of Valor Christian High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Sprout is the first Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Valor Christian 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 field, distinguishes Sprout as Colorado's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Sprout 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.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-8, 126-pound sophomore raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:42.1. Sprout finished second at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships with a time of 14:52, and crossed the line 21st at the national NXN Final, earning Third Team All-American status. He also won the Liberty Bell Invitational and the Region 3 championships.

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Sprout has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

Sprout joins Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Tanner Norman (2016-17, The Classical Academy), Paul Roberts (2015-16, Lyons High School), Eric Hamer (2014-15, Palmer Ridge High School), Zach Alhamra (2013-14, Pine Creek High School), Ashi Geberkidane (2012-13, Denver East High School), Ty Williams (2011-12, Telluride High School), Spencer Wenck (2010-11, Palmer Ridge High School), Scott Fauble (2009-10, Wheat Ridge), Evan Appel (2008-09, Dakota Ridge), and Kevin Williams (2007-08, D'Evelyn) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sprout 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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