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**GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 12, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Gavin McElhennon of Gonzaga College High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. McElhennon is the third Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Gonzaga College 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 McElhennon as District of Columbia'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, McElhennon 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-10, 130-pound sophomore raced to the D.C. State Athletic Association individual championship this past season with a time of 16:34. McElhennon also won the Pacers Running DCXC Invitational, while placing second at the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference championships, fourth at the Glory Days Invitational and seventh at the Jesuit championships.

A devoted member of his church's youth group, McElhennon has participated in summer service-mission trips and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Father McKenna Center for the homeless and low-income families. "As a freshman, Gavin was consistently the number eight runner on a deep team, but this year he emerged as our top runner, leading the way in every race," said Gonzaga coach John Ausema. "He works hard in practice and sets the tone for the rest of the team, and he has a great innate racing sense. I'm excited to see what he can do the next two years."

McElhennon has maintained a 4.33 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.

McElhennon joins Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Harry Monroe (2016-17, Gonzaga College High School), Tristan Colaizzi (2015-16 & 2014-15, Georgetown Day School), Tai Dinger (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Albans School), Mike Crozier (2011-12, Gonzaga College High School), John McGowan (2010-11 & 2008-09, Sidwell Friends School), Tom Harrison (2009-10, St. Albans School), and Nick Bax (2007-08, St. Albans School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, McElhennon 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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