

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)

**CHILES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 Michael Phillips of Chiles High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Phillips is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Chiles 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 Phillips as Florida'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, Phillips 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-9, 150-pound senior raced to his second consecutive Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:14.69, leading the Timberwolves to second place as a team. Phillips also won the Cougar Challenge, the Big Bend Invitational, the Buffalo Invitational, the District 3 championships and the Region 1 championships. He took second at the Great American Cross Country Festival as well as the Foot Locker South Regional championships and finished 16th at the national Footlocker Cross Country Championships.

Phillips has volunteered locally on behalf of charity road races. "Phillips is very consistent and very tough," said Andrew Wills, head coach at Leon High. "He's a humble kid, but a real competitor, just a bulldog out on the course. He's hard to beat."

Phillips has maintained a 3.61 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Phillips joins Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Caleb Pottorff (2016-17, Lincoln Park Academy), Steven Cross (2015-16, Merritt Island High School), Sukhi Khosla (2014-15, Leon High School), Nick Diaz (2013-14, Miami Sunset Senior High School), Thomas Howell (2012-13, Niceville High School), Andres Arroyo (2011-12, Colonial High School), Jimmy Clark (2010-11, Creekside High School), Matt Mizereck (2009-10, Leon), Brian Atkinson (2008-09, Melbourne), and Brian Atkinson (2007-08, Melbourne) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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