

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)

**YARMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE 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 Luke Laverdiere of Yarmouth High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Laverdiere is the first Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Yarmouth 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 Laverdiere as Maine'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, Laverdiere 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 state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-10, 145-pound senior won the Class B state meet for a second straight season this past fall with a time of 15:43.89, breaking the tape 1:03.54 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Clippers to a third-place finish as a team. Laverdiere won the Maine XC Festival of Champions and placed 17th at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships. He was unbeaten against in-state competition.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Laverdiere has volunteered locally at MaineGeneral Medical Center and as a youth mentor. "Luke was in a class of his own this year," said Garrett Martin, head coach of Lincoln Academy. "Even the top kids from Maine who raced against him admitted they were aiming for second in any race they were in."

Laverdiere has maintained an A average in the classroom. He will attend Harvard University, where he will run for the cross country and track teams, beginning 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.

Two-time winner Laverdiere joins Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Paul Casavant (2015-16, Hampden Academy), Aaron Willingham (2014-15, Mt. Blue High School), Josef Holt-Andrews (2013-14, Telstar Regional High School), Daniel Curts (2012-13, Ellsworth High School), Matt McClintock (2011-12 & 2010-11, Madison Area Memorial High School), Will Geoghegan (2009-10 & 2008-09, Brunswick), and Nick Williams (2007-08, Poland Regional) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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

###