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**R.J. REYNOLDS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 John Tatter of R.J. Reynolds High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Tatter is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from R.J. Reynolds 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 Tatter as North Carolina'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, Tatter 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 6-foot 130-pound senior broke the tape at the Foot Locker South Regional championships with a career-best time of 14:55 and followed up with a fourth-place finish at Foot Locker nationals, earning All-American honors and crossing the line in 15:27.90, just 8.2 seconds off the winning pace. Tatter also captured the NCHSAA Class 4A State Championship individual title in 15:20.11, leading the Demons to a sixth-place finish as a team. A three-time All-State selection, he won nine of 12 races in 2017, clocked the fastest 5K among North Carolina prep boys and was the state's top finisher at either Foot Locker nationals or the Nike Cross Nationals.

A member of his school's Chinese club and Crosby Scholars, he has volunteered as a YMCA youth coach for the past three years. "John is one of the most outstanding young men I've had the opportunity to coach," said Demons' head coach David Wainwright. "He is incredibly disciplined and an excellent leader of the team. More than that, John is a young man of character, which will keep him rooted in the right things as he becomes successful. I have never met a high school athlete so impressive, and yet so humble."

Tatter has maintained a 4.65 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Tatter joins Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Connor Lane (2016-17, Cardinal Gibbons High School), Jeremy Brown (2015-16 & 2014-15, Broughton High School), Ben Huffman (2013-14, Providence Day School), Bakri Abushouk (2012-13, Cary High School), Thomas Graham (2011-12, Cary Academy), Blake Williams (2010-11, Northern High School), Jake Hurysz (2009-10, Eastern Alamance High School), Taylor Gilland (2008-09, Chapel Hill High School), and Ryan Hill (2007-08, Hickory High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Tatter 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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