

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

**LAKOTA EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OHIO 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 Dustin Horter of Lakota East High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Horter is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lakota East 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 Horter as Ohio'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, Horter 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 6-foot, 145-pound senior won the Division I state meet for a second straight year this past season with a time of 15:03.5, breaking the tape 0.4 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. Horter won the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in a school-record time of 14:57.6 for 5K and then earned First Team All-American status by finishing sixth at the NXN Final. He is a four-time First Team All-State selection and the three-time Cincinnati Enquirer Cross Country Runner of the Year.

A member of the Student Athletic Leadership Team at Lakota East, Horter has participated in multiple service-mission trips with his church. He has volunteered locally at a food pantry and donated his time as a teacher's aide at Vacation Bible School. "Dustin was phenomenal this year," said Tom Rapp, head coach of Mason High. "He likes to push the pace right from the start and leave no doubt. Most of the time there is no one around him and then he races the clock and himself."

Hortor has maintained a weighted 4.15 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Indiana University 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 Horter joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Andrew Jordan (2015-16, Watkins Memorial High School), Michael Vitucci (2014-15, St. Xavier High School), Mark Hadley (2013-14, Boardman High School), Sam Wharton (2012-13, Tippecanoe High School), Sam Praker (2011-12, Versailles High School), Michael Brajdic (2010-11, Bay High School), Zach Wills (2009-10 & 2008-09, Mason High School), and Donny Roys (2007-08, Medina High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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

###