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**WEST CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Derick Peters of West Central High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Peters is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from West Central 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 Peters as South Dakota'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, Peters 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-11, 165-pound senior won the Class A state meet for a second straight year this past season with a time of 15:06.2, breaking the tape 52.54 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Trojans to a first-place finish as a team. Peters finished second at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships and then took 26th at the NXN Final. He also placed 22nd at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships. Peters was undefeated against in-state competition and recorded the fastest 5K time in the state with his first-place finish at the Lennox Invitational in 14:53.65.

A drum major for the West Central High marching band and a trombone player in the West Central concert and jazz bands, Peters has volunteered locally as a youth soccer referee. "Derick built on the success he had a year ago and dominated South Dakota cross country this season," said Luke Vander Leest, head coach of Sioux Falls Christian High. "Derick Peters is the real deal."

Peters has maintained a weighted 4.06 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at the University of Wisconsin 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 Peters joins Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Gabe Peters (2015-16, Lincoln High School), Will Lauer (2014-15, Lincoln High School), Addison DeHaven (2013-14 & 2012-13, Brookings High School), Tony Smoragiewicz (2011-12 & 2010-11, Rapid City Central High School), Josh Heitkamp (2009-10, Washington High School), Alex Muntefering (2008-09, Parkston High School), and Bill Kogel (2007-08, Roosevelt High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Peters 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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