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**ALEDO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 Graydon Morris of Aledo High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Morris is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Aledo 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 Morris as Texas'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, Morris 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-3, 140-pound sophomore raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:58.9. Morris took second at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 15:23.3, earning All-American honors, and finished third at the Foot Locker South Regional championships. He also won the Paschal Invitational, the Falcon Fast Invitational, the District 6 championships and the Region 1 championships.

Morris has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs and has collected athletic equipment for underprivileged Kenyan athletes. "Graydon Morris is the most gifted, selfless student-athlete I've ever had the pleasure of coaching," said Aledo coach Mike Pinkerton. "He has set his goals very high, and I have no doubt that he'll accomplish all of them. On top of the list is to represent the USA in the Olympic Games, and I plan to be in attendance when that day comes."

Morris has maintained a 3.69 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Morris joins Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Reed Brown (2016-17 & 2015-16, Carroll Senior High School), Carter Blunt (2014-15, Independence High School), Frank Lara (2013-14, Strake Jesuit College Preparatory), Robert Domanic (2012-13, Hebron High School), Craig Nowak (2011-12, Cypress Woods High School), Craig Lutz (2010-11 & 2009-10, Marcus High School), Reed Connor (2008-09, The Woodlands High School), and Colby Lowe (2007-08, Southlake Carroll High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Morris 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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