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**LOUDOUN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Sam Affolder of Loudoun Valley High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Affolder is the second Gatorade Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Loudoun Valley 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 Affolder as Virginia'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, Affolder 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 5-foot-10, 160-pound junior won the Group 4A state meet this past season with a time of 15:20, breaking the tape six seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Vikings to the state championship as a team. Affolder finished second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships and crossed the line in 23rd at the NXN Final—just 1.5 seconds off All-American pace—as the Vikings won the team national title. A transfer from Carlisle, Pa., he was the 2017 Washington Post All-Met Runner of the Year.

Affolder was attending his third high school in three years. He has volunteered at a soup kitchen and as a teacher's aide at Vacation Bible School. "Sam not only made the team better from an athletic standpoint but also from a confidence standpoint," said Marc Hunter, head coach of Loudoun Valley High. "He brought to the team a swagger and a level of confidence that was not there."

Affolder has maintained an unweighted 4.04 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior 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.

Affolder joins Gatorade Virginia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Waleed Suliman (2016-17, Douglas Freeman High School), Drew Hunter (2015-16 & 2014-15, Loudoun Valley High School), Louis Colson (2013-14, Thomas Edison High School), Sean McGorty (2012-13, Chantilly High School), Ahmed Bile (2011-12 & 2010-11, Annandale High School), Kevin Dowd (2009-10, Fairfax High School), Thomas Porter (2008-09, Mountain View High School), and Jason Witt (2007-08, Midlothian High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Affolder 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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