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**VOLCANO VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jericho Cleveland of Volcano Vista High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Cleveland is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Volcano Vista 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 track, distinguishes Cleveland as New Mexico's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Cleveland joins an elite alumni association of state track & field award-winners, including Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa), Allyson Felix (2002-03, Los Angeles Baptist High School, Calif.), Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas), Grant Fisher (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-1, 155-pound senior middle distance and distance talent swept the 800-, 1600- and 3200-meter events at the Class 6A state meet this past season, leading the Hawks to second place as a team. Cleveland's winning time of 1:52.59 in the 800 is a personal best, while his victories at 1600 and 3200 were a repeat of the outcome at the 2017 state meet. In addition to clocking a personal-best 4:07.89 at April's Mt. SAC Relays, which ranked as the nation's No. 5 time among prep competitors in 2018, he ran third in the mile at the adidas Boost Boston Games in 4:08.95 (U.S. No. 16). Cleveland also PR'd in the 3200 during his final prep campaign (9:17.64).

Cleveland has volunteered on behalf of Noon Day Ministries, the Sagebrush Community Church, the Road Runner Food Bank, Catholic Charities Refugee Outreach, Mission of Mercy Dental Services and Crossroads for Women, which serves battered and single mothers who are homeless. A former participant in the World View Academy Leadership School as well as the Teen PACT Government Leadership School, and a member of the Junior Toastmasters Gavel Club, Cleveland has completed a service-mission trip to Guatemala with Next Step Ministries in addition to donating his time to USATF Junior Olympic youth programs. "Jericho made the jump from a top quality in-state athlete to a national-caliber runner by sheer will and determination," said Albuquerque Academy head coach Adam Kedge, who coached 2008-09 Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year Curtis Beach. "He trained with pin-point focus for a solid 18 months, never wavering no matter the obstacle or setback. The drive and motivation to achieve put him on the path to consistent top-quality performances this past spring. From the indoor into the outdoor season, all the way through state and national postseason Jericho, turned in elite performance after elite performance, proving he was one of the mid-distance and distance runners in the nation."

Cleveland is home-schooled in affiliation with the Christian Association of Parent Educators and has maintained a 3.63 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Colorado, beginning 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.

Cleveland joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Jackson Morris (2016-17 & 2014-15, Albuquerque Academy), Alejandro Goldston (2015-16, Albuquerque Academy), Mike Budick (2013-14, Volcano Vista High School), Luis Martinez (2012-13 & 2011-12, Sue Cleveland High School), Eric Fenton (2010-11, Hope Christian School), Warrick Campbell (2009-10, Highland High School), Curtis Beach (2008-09 & 2007-08, Albuquerque Academy), and Matthew Tebo (2006-07, El Dorado High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Cleveland 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 us on Twitter. 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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