

**PINE CREST SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 28, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Tsion Yared of Pine Crest School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Yared is the first Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Pine Crest 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 racecourse, distinguishes Yared as Florida's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Yared joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg High School, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-4 junior raced to the Class 2A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:26.63, leading the Panthers to second place as a team. Yared took second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships in 17:44.7, and finished 23rd nationally at the NXN Final. She also won the King of the Hill Invitational and the St. Thomas University Invitational, and finished fourth at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival.

Also a talented musician, Yared has participated in service-mission trips to Ethiopia and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Beta Club and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. "Tsion had a remarkable track season last spring and that propelled her into her best summer of training and her best cross country season ever," said Pine Crest coach Paul Baur. "Her individual accomplishments are staggering, but how she brought the team together—despite our injuries—and to finish on the podium for a seventh year in a row will be something her teammates cherish forever."

Yared has maintained a weighted 4.85 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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.

Yared joins Gatorade Florida Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Ana Wallace (2017-18, Chiles High School), Bailey Hertenstein (2016-17 & 2015-16, Riverview High School), Rafaella Gibbons (2014-15, Winter Park High School), and Emily Edwards (2013-14, Fort Myers High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Yared has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.