

WASHBURN RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS 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 Jaybe Shufelberger of Washburn Rural High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Shufelberger is the second Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Washburn Rural 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 racecourse, distinguishes Shufelberger as Kansas' 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, Shufelberger 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 state's only girl to qualify for a national championship meet, the 5-foot-6 senior took fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships this past season, crossing the line in a personal-best time of 17:31.10. Shufelberger's XNR time was the fastest 5K clocking by a Kansas girl last fall, and she also raced to a top-50 finish at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships (46th in 20:01.80). She took second at the KSHSAA 6A State Championships in 18:42.30, and capped her career with a top-100 finish at the national NXN Final (92nd in 18:38.60).

A dedicated member of the Washburn student yearbook team, Shufelberger takes photos, completes interviews, sells advertisements and writes articles on a variety of school activities and sports. She has also volunteered locally on behalf of the Homestead of Auburn assisted living community on a weekly basis, in addition to donating her time to the Sunflower Striders Running Club, an area non-profit committed to the overall health and well-being of all who engage in physical activity. "Jaybe is the kind of athlete every coach hopes to work with," said Washburn High School head coach Matt Swedlund. "She always shows up and always works hard. This season, everything came together perfectly for her, and she overcame the adversity of struggling in the heat at the state meet to bounce back and qualify for the NXN Final. She's been a tremendous asset to our program and an all-around great person to be around."

Shufelberger has maintained a weighted 4.14 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Kansas State University 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.

Shufelberger joins Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Olivia Sovereign (2017-18, Saint Thomas Aquinas High School), Molly Born (2016-17, Shawnee Mission Northwest High School), Cailie Logue (2015-16 & 2014-15, Girard High School), and Emily Venters (2013-14, Free State 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," Shufelberger 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.

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