

## **HUNTINGTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MARYLAND GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 28, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Oakley Olson of Huntingtown High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Olson is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Huntingtown 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 Olson as Maryland'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, Olson 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-6 sophomore won the Class 3A state meet this past season with a time of 18:59.6, breaking the tape 12.54 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Hurricanes to a fourth-place finish as a team. Olson was the only runner to clock a sub-19 time over the 3-mile Hereford High School course across all classifications. She was also the top Maryland competitor at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships, finishing 11th in 18:22.4, a personal-best by 35 seconds.

Olson has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Competitor-wise, Oakley is a fighter and really fun to watch," said Donny Mickey, head coach of C. Milton Wright High School. "If she is in the race, you know the pace will be honest, and you are in for a fight."

Olson, who transferred to Northern High School in Owings after the recent Thanksgiving holiday, has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her 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.

Olson joins Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Abbey Green (2017-18, Walter Johnson High School), Maria Coffin (2016-17 & 2015-16, Annapolis High School), Nora McUmbler (2014-15, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School), and Ellie Gonzalez (2013-14, The Catholic High School of Baltimore) 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," Olson 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).