

**BILLINGS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA 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 Tiahna Vladic of Billings Senior High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Vladic is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Billings Senior 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 Vladic as Montana'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, Vladic 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 2016-17 Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-4 senior won the Class AA state meet this past season with a time of 17:40.71, breaking the tape 22.79 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Broncs to a third-place finish as a team. Vladic took second at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships and she finished 19th at the NXN Final to earn All-American honors.

Vladic has volunteered locally at the Montana Marathon and as a youth running coach. "Tiahna is a top-notch competitor," said Jesse Rumsey, head coach of Flathead High. "She is an incredibly gritty athlete. The Montana women's field for distance running is very deep, and she has pushed herself to the top."

Vladic has maintained a weighted 3.78 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Two-time winner Vladic joins Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Camila Noe (2017-18, Bozeman High School), Annie Hill (2015-16, Glacier High School), and Makena Morley (2014-15 & 2013-14, Bigfork 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," Vladic 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).