

**MERRIMACK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW HAMPSHIRE 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 Sophia Reynolds of Merrimack Valley High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Reynolds is the first Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Merrimack Valley 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 Reynolds as New Hampshire'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, Reynolds 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-5 freshman broke the tape at the New Hampshire Meet of Champions his past season, clocking a personal-best 17:59.60 to finish 13.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. She also won the Division 2 State Meet individual title with the fastest all-class time of the day (18:32.90). The state's top performer in finishing second at the New England Cross Country Championship with a time of 18:42.40, Reynolds missed qualifying for nationals by one place, taking 11th at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships in 18:30.80.

A nanny and primary caregiver for a family with three young children last summer, she has volunteered locally as a middle school cross country instructor, and also helped organize a summer youth running program in the area. Additionally, she has donated her time to multiple charity fundraiser road races. "Sophia is a very self-motivated and humble athlete who, as a ninth grader, is already a student of the sport, said Merrimack Valley head coach Dave Irving. "She does all the little things to make her the runner she's become. She has shown significant improvement every year since picking up the sport in middle school, and is also one of the kindest people you could meet on a running trail."

Reynolds has maintained a 98.6 average in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

Reynolds joins Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jacqueline Gaughan (2017-18 & 2016-17, Exeter High School), and Maegan Doody (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Oyster River 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," Reynolds 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.