

**PINECREST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Carmen Alder of Pinecrest High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Alder is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Pinecrest 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 Alder as North Carolina'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, Alder 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-8 sophomore broke the tape at the NCHSAA 4A State Championships, clocking the fastest all-class time of the day in 17:50.64 to finish 12.04 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. The state's top performer in finishing second at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival, Alder ran a personal-best time of 17:28.00, which ranks as the fastest girls 5K in North Carolina last fall. She also finished 10th at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships in 18:19.70. Alder won nine of 11 races during the 2018 campaign and clocked a sub-18 5K a state-best three times.

A leader in her church community's Young Women's service organization, she has volunteered on behalf of Days for Girls, providing humanitarian aid to worldwide refugees, as well as the Special Olympics. The daughter of a former Ecuadorian women's national team runner, she has launched a youth running clinic in Ecuador in addition to volunteering stateside at a local bookstore and donating her time to the Helping Hands Organization in multiple hurricane clean-up efforts. A participant in a weekday bible study class and a member of her church choir, she is also part of her school's Future Business Leaders of America club. "Carmen is probably the best female runner in school history—I've seen them all," said Pinecrest head coach John Buchholz. "She works extremely hard, her attitude is infectious and she's the type of role model (peers can look up to) in athletics, the community and the classroom."

Alder has maintained a weighted 3.63 GPA 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.

Alder joins Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Mariah Howlett (2017-18, Lake Norman Charter School), Nevada Mareno (2016-17 & 2015-16, Leesville Road High School), Elly Henes (2014-15, Green Hope High School), and Kalya Montgomery (2013-14, Mount Tabor 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," Alder 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).

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