

**JAMESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Meghan Ford of Jamestown High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Ford is the first Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Jamestown 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 Ford as North Dakota'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, Ford 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 raced to the Class A state championship this past season with a time of 17:56.9. Ford also won the Western Dakota Association championship, the Devils Lake Invitational, the Blue-White Invitational and the Andrew Carlson Distance Challenge. She took 16th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships and 17th at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships.

A devoted member of her church community, Ford has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, Operation Christmas Child, a Vacation Bible School and suicide-prevention initiatives. "Meghan Ford proves that hard work and dedication can lead to great accomplishments," said Jamestown coach Ken Gardner. "Ever since she joined the team as a seventh-grader, she has put the time in, both in-season and offseason. The result has been a consistent rise in the ranks of elite runners in the state."

Ford has maintained a 4.0 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.

Ford joins Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Kelby Rinas (2017-18, Mandan High School), Karly Ackley (2016-17 & 2014-15, Grand Forks Central High School), Mattie Shirley-Fairbairn (2015-16, Bismarck High School), and Jordan Jacob (2013-14, Century 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," Ford 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.