

## **NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Sophia Maag of Norman High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Maag is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Norman 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 Maag as Oklahoma'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, Maag 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-4 senior won the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 18:49.9, breaking the tape 2.8 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Tigers to a third-place finish as a team. Maag won four of her seven races on the season and finished 65th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships. The state's high school triathlon state champion as a junior, she was the 2018 The Oklahoman All-City Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year.

A member of the Norman High Physics Hall of Fame, Maag is a member of the Oklahoma Indian Student Honor Society. She has volunteered locally at the Norman Public Library and she also serves on the Teen Board of Advocates at the Stephenson Cancer Center. "Sophia is a strong and gritty competitor who kept getting stronger as the season progressed," said David Riden, head coach of Deer Creek High. "There is something to be admired in kids who finish even stronger than they start."

Maag has maintained a weighted 4.30 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in her class. 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.

Maag joins Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Rilee Rigdon (2017-18, Bartlesville High School), and Cheyenne Walden (2016-17, 2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Charles Page 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," Maag 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).