

**ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Ava Dobson of St. Joseph's Catholic School as its 2018-19 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Dobson is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph's Catholic 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 Dobson as South 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, Dobson 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 junior raced to the Class 2A state championship this past season with a time of 18:03.47, leading the Knights to the state title as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Dobson also won the Greenville County championships and the CiCi's Sandhills Invitational. She placed 14th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships.

Dobson has volunteered locally on behalf of Triune Mercy Center, helping the low-income and homeless populations in Greenville, along with Rise Against Hunger, an international humanitarian aid organization in addition to donating her time to a summer camp for special needs children. "Ava is a true example of tenacity in the face of adversity," said St. Joseph's coach Marie Kernell. "Even when she couldn't race because of an injury sustained at the end of the track season, she worked just as hard as everyone else with the goal of joining her team as soon as her doctor would release her. She's very coachable, a team player, positive, humble and upbeat."

Dobson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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.

Two-time winner Dobson joins Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Cate Ambrose (2016-17, Riverside High School), Logan Morris (2015-16 & 2014-15, Spartanburg Christian Academy) and Ashbrook Gwinn (2013-14, Aiken 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," Dobson 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.