

**DOBYNS-BENNETT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 Sasha Neglia of Dobyns-Bennett High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Neglia is the first Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Dobyns-Bennett 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 Neglia as Tennessee'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, Neglia 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 state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-3 junior won the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships this past season with a time of 17:37.4, breaking the tape 7.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. Neglia followed up by earning All-American status at the NXN Final, crossing the line in 15th place with a time of 17:29.8. The winner of the 2016 and 2017 Division 1 Large School state meet, Neglia was 200 meters from a three-peat when she took a wrong turn on the sub-optimally marked course, which led to her disqualification.

A member of the Mu Alpha Theta math honor society, Neglia has volunteered locally as a youth track and swimming coach. "Sasha was definitely the cream of the crop in Tennessee this season," said Len Jeffers, head coach of Daniel Boone High. "Sasha is a class act. She dwells more on the positives than the negatives as she displayed by coming back after the issues at state."

Neglia has maintained a weighted 4.52 GPA 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 Neglia joins Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Rebecca Story (2016-17, Christian Academy of Knoxville), Taylor Cuneo (2015-16 & 2014-15, Central Magnet School), and Bailee Dean (2013-14, Cane Ridge 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," Neglia 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.