

**MCKINNEY NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 London Culbreath of McKinney North High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Culbreath is the first Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from McKinney North 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 Culbreath as Texas' 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, Culbreath 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 junior raced to her third straight Class 5A state championship this past season with a time of 16:58.6. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Culbreath won the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championship in 17:39.3 and the Foot Locker South Regional championship in 17:12. She broke the tape at the Southlake Carroll Invitational, the McNeil Invitational and the Region 2 Championships.

Culbreath has volunteered locally on behalf of an animal shelter, a retirement home, food banks for the needy and youth sports camps. "London continues to impress me with her drive and focus to be the best she can be," said McKinney North coach Jessica Richards. "She loves being a great teammate and views her talents as a gift to share."

Culbreath has maintained a weighted 4.60 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.

Three-time winner Culbreath joins Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Abby Gray (2015-16, Alamo Heights High School), Paige Hofstad (2014-15, New Braunfels High School), and Natalie Rathjen (2013-14, Highland Park 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," Culbreath 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.