

**HOMEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ALABAMA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 11, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Will Stone of Homewood High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Stone is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Homewood 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 field, distinguishes Stone as Alabama's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Stone joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park High School, Ill.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-10, 140-pound senior won his third consecutive Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:26.52, leading the Patriots to the state title as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Stone also won the Chickasaw Trails Invitational, the Husky Challenge and the Section 3 championship. He placed 13th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships.

A devoted member of his church youth group and a talented musician, Stone has volunteered locally on behalf of a food pantry, the Beta Club, the Key Club and the Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs. "It was obvious from the first time I met Will that he was a determined young man with a drive to succeed in everything he did," said Homewood coach Joshua Donaldson. "He's also a natural leader who pushes those around him to be the best they can be."

Stone has maintained a 4.33 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Lee University 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Three-time winner Stone joins Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Cole Stidfole (2015-16, Oak Mountain High School), Ben Bryant (2014-15, Opelika High School), and Mac Macoy (2013-14, Vestavia Hills 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," Stone has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He 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).