

## MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OHIO 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 **Conant Smith of Middletown High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Smith is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Middletown 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 Smith as Ohio'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, Smith 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 6-foot-1, 150-pound senior won the Division I state meet this past season with a time of 15:43.4, breaking the tape 2.7 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. Smith also finished 21st at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships. The 2018 Butler County Sports Athlete of the Year, he won seven of nine races during the year.

Smith has volunteered locally with MetroParks of Butler County, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "In highly competitive situations, Conant does an amazing job of keeping his composure," said Adam Thomas, head coach of Lakota East High. "I was always very confident that he would have the strength and will to get to the finish line first."

Smith has maintained a 3.79 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Arizona State 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.

Smith joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Dustin Horter (2017-18 & 2016-17, Lakota East High School), Andrew Jordan (2015-16, Watkins Memorial High School), Michael Vitucci (2014-15, St. Xavier High School), and Mark Hadley (2013-14, Boardman 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," Smith 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](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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