

WINFIELD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 11, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Aaron Withrow of Winfield High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Withrow is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Winfield 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 Withrow as West Virginia'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, Withrow 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 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-3, 170-pound senior won the Group A-AA state meet this past season with a time of 16:02.05, breaking the tape 40.62 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Generals to a second-place finish as a team. Withrow crossed the line 25th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships and won five of eight races in 2018. He did not lose to an in-state competitor all season.

Withrow has participated in two service-mission trips to Charlotte, N.C., and he has volunteered locally as a peer math tutor. He has also donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Aaron has a tremendous amount of God-given talent and has worked very hard to make the most of it," said Jon Griffith, head coach of Bridgeport High. "Aaron was phenomenal this year. I was impressed with the work he has done in the offseason to be his best."

Withrow has maintained a weighted 4.32 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in his class. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at the University of Kentucky 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.

Withrow joins Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Chris Barbera (2017-18, Woodrow Wilson High School), Philip White (2016-17, University High School), Seth Edwards (2015-16 & 2014-15, University High School) and Matthew Brafford (2013-14, George Washington 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," Withrow 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.