

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

CHICAGO (January 27, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Lainey Phelps of Homewood High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Phelps is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls 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 Phelps as Alabama'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, Phelps 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-7 senior raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:14.7, leading the Patriots to the state title as a team. The state's Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year as a freshman, Phelps also earned victories at the Section 3 championship, the Southern Showcase, the Chickasaw Trails Invitational and the Husky Challenge.

A devoted member of her church community, Phelps has volunteered locally on behalf of her school's peer helpers program and the Bell Center for Early Intervention Services. "I don't know if any other runner in the state has had the setbacks that Lainey has experienced and come back with such determination and perseverance to reach such a high level," said Homewood coach Joshua Donaldson. "She gives everything she has to each task she sets her mind to."

Phelps has maintained a 4.23 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Vanderbilt 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 and 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.

Two-time winner Phelps joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Presley Miles (2018-19, Saint James School), Amaris Tyynismaa (2017-18 & 2015-16, Montgomery Catholic Preparatory School), and Kaitlin York (2014-15, American Christian Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Phelps 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.