

DESERT VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARIZONA 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 **Lauren Ping of Desert Vista High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Ping is the second Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Desert Vista 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 Ping as Arizona'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, Ping 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-9 freshman raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:36.8, leading the Thunder to the state title as a team. Ping also won the Desert Solstice Invitational and the Mt. Sac Invitational, while placing second at both the Woodbridge Classic and the Nike Desert Twilight Festival. She finished sixth at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships and placed 27th nationally at the NXN Final.

Ping has volunteered locally on behalf of a youth running camp. "Lauren Ping is just a freshman, but she's already a veteran, seasoned runner," said Desert Vista head coach Chris Hanson. "She qualified for Nike Cross Nationals when she was a seventh-grader. She's physically blessed, and she's not intimidated by anyone or anything."

Ping has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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 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.

Ping joins recent Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Abi Archer (2018-19, Chaparral High School), Maya Smith (2017-18, Northland Preparatory Academy), Allie Schadler (2016-17 & 2015-16, Rio Rico High School), and Dani Jones (2014-15, Desert Vista High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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