

**MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 **Ciara O'Shea of Madison Central High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. O'Shea is the first Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Madison Central 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 O'Shea as Kentucky'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, O'Shea 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-2 freshman won the Class AAA state meet for a second straight year this past season with a time of 18:29.42, breaking the tape 40.16 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Indians to an 18th-place finish as a team. O'Shea was unbeaten against in-state competition in 2019 and took won the 13/14-year-old Division at the Cross Country Coaches National Youth Championships. She also placed 21st at the Foot Locker South Regional championships.

O'Shea has volunteered locally as part of food drives for the needy and has also donated her time at a retirement community. She has served on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Ciara is without question the top female runner in Kentucky," said Mike Horan, head coach of Eastern High. "Despite being a freshman, she carries herself with tremendous composure and consistency."

O'Shea has maintained a 4.0 GPA 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.

O'Shea joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Karlee Hoffman (2018-19, Daviess County High School), Kaitlyn Lacy (2017-18, Louisville Male High School), Michaela Reinhart (2016-17 & 2015-16, Lexington Catholic High School), and Gabriella Karas (2014-15, Martha Layne Collins High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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