

**RUNNELS SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE LOUISIANA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 27, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Annie Fink of Runnels School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Fink is the first Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Runnels 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 Fink as Louisiana'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. Fink 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-5 senior broke the tape in the LHSAA Class B State Championship race this past season, clocking the fastest all-class time of the day and setting a Class B record with a time of 18:25.10 to finish 1:04 ahead of her next-closest competitor. The Raiders finished second in their class as a team. Fink won five of eight races last fall and took second twice, avenging her only loss to an in-state runner at the NXN South Regional championships, where she crossed the line 50th in a 5K personal-best 19:21.78. She also PR'd at three miles last fall with a 17:43.75 at the Catholic HS XC Invitational, where she finished second behind a runner from Tennessee.

Fink has served as a class representative and has donated her time locally as a gymnastics coach, a Louisiana Marathon volunteer and as an after-school aide in the Spanish department of an elementary school. She has volunteered extensively in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area on behalf of the National Charity League, helping the homeless, the elderly and underserved children. In 2019, Fink participated in a Praying Pelicans service-mission trip to Alaska. A three-year member of the Louisiana Youth Orchestra's violin section, Fink is also a Runnels School Student Ambassador and has been a concert master in her school's string orchestra four consecutive years. "It's one thing to set a class record at the state championships, but it's quite another to do it when the next-closest runner finishes more than a minute behind you," said Erik Boal, editor for DyeStat. "Annie is an incredibly well-rounded kid and may only have scratched the surface of her distance-running talent."

Fink has maintained a 3.86 GPA in the classroom. She will attend LSU this fall, where she will run cross country and track.

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.

Fink joins recent Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Mary Nusloch (2018-19, Academy of the Sacred Heart), Lauren Hendry (2017-18, St. Joseph's Academy), Kirsten Landry (2016-17, Ascension Episcopal School), and Gabrielle Jennings (2015-16 & 2014-15, First Baptist Christian School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Fink 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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