

MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MARYLAND 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 **Juliette Whittaker of Mount de Sales Academy** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Whittaker is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mount de Sales Academy.

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 Whittaker as Maryland'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, Whittaker 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 sophomore won the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland state meet this past season with a time of 19:08.58, breaking the tape 1:29.78 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Sailors to a third-place finish as a team. Whittaker also won the Maryland/DC Private School Championships in 18:59. After finishing seventh at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships, she earned All-American status by taking 13th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

The president of the Mount de Sales sophomore class, Whittaker has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and as a peer tutor. "Juliette is such a special talent, unlike anything I have ever seen before," said Marshall Edrington, head coach of Notre Dame Preparatory School. "Running to her is effortless—even at the end of a race she looks calm and relaxed. She is just on another level."

Whittaker has maintained a weighted 4.29 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior 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.

Whittaker joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Oakley Olson (2018-19, Huntingtown High School), Abbey Green (2017-18, Walter Johnson High School), Maria Coffin (2016-17 & 2015-16, Annapolis High School), and Nora McUmbler (2014-15, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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