

PIONEER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Zofia Dudek of Pioneer High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Dudek is the second Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Pioneer 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 Dudek as Michigan'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, Dudek 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-6 senior raced to a national title at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season, breaking the tape in 16:45. Dudek also won the Division 1 individual state championship with a time of 17:00.4, leading the Pioneers to the state title as a team. She won at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in 16:49.3 and took second at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships. Dudek also chalked up victories at the MSU Spartan Invitational, the River Rat Open and the Southeastern Conference championships, and she placed fifth at the European U-20 championships, running for Poland.

Also a talented singer and musician as well as a member of Pioneer High's Science Olympiad team, which finished second in the state and fifth in the country in 2019, Dudek has volunteered locally on behalf of curriculum night, freshman orientation, science night for elementary school students and community nature-preservation events. Also the founder of the Dumbledore's Army book club at PHS, which focuses on improving literacy among students by hosting book readings and organizing book drives, she is a member of her school's Bel Canto Choir as well as the student-led Acapella group, "Accidentals." "Zofia is a very hard worker and a great leader who sets a great example for the other girls on the team," said Pioneer coach Nancy Boudreau. "She was happier to win the team title at the state championships than she was to win the individual state title. She is an absolute delight to have on our team."

Dudek has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Stanford 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.

Dudek joins recent Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Abby VanderKooi (2018-19, Western Michigan Christian High School), Olivia Theis (2017-18, Lansing Catholic High School), Anne Forsyth (2016-17, Pioneer High School), Madison Troy (2015-16, Grandville High School) and Audrey Belf (2014-15, Seaholm High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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