

**LINCOLN EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 **Berlyn Schutz of Lincoln East High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Schutz is the first Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lincoln East 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 Schutz as Nebraska'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, Schutz 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-3 freshman won the 15/16-year-old Division at the Cross Country Coaches National Youth Championships this past season. Schutz was also the top Nebraska finisher at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, placing 11th in 17:57.6. The captain of the Lincoln Journal Star All-City Cross Country team, she was unbeaten during the regular season and took second in the Division A state meet by 0.4 seconds.

Schutz has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and as a youth running coach. "I am really excited to see how Berlyn continues to improve," said Brian Kabourek, head coach of Lincoln East High. "She has a competitive motor, and learning the nuances of running has really helped her this season."

Schutz 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.

Schutz joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Kaylie Crews (2018-19, Papillion-La Vista South High School), Gabby McGinn (2017-18, Millard West High School), Taylor Somers (2016-17 & 2015-16, Millard South High School), and Jeralyn Poe (2014-15, Lincoln North Star High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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