

**SUE CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Leah Futey of Sue Cleveland High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Futey is the second Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Sue Cleveland 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 Futey as New Mexico'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, Futey 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-9 freshman won the Class 5A state meet title this past season with a time of 18:26.45, breaking the tape 19.2 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Storm to a third-place finish as a team. Futey, who finished second at the 5A state meet as an eighth-grader, also won the Albuquerque Metro Championships and finished second at the Rio Rancho Jamboree in 2019. She was ill during the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships, but still mustered an 80th-place finish.

Futey, whose sister has special needs, has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics. She has also donated her time at USA Track and Field events and on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Leah is without question a very talented runner," said Kenny Henry, head coach of Cleveland High. "However, her ability pales in comparison to her work ethic. Leah is the hardest-working person on our entire team. She never shies away from a training session, even in the weight room."

Futey has maintained a 3.6 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.

Futey joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Jasmine Turtle-Morales (2018-19, Eldorado High School), Amanda Mayoral (2017-18, 2016-17 & 2015-16, Cleveland High School), and Natasha Bernal (2014-15, La Cueva High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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