

**JAMESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 **Meghan Ford of Jamestown High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Ford is the first Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Jamestown 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 Ford as North Dakota'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, Ford 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 junior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:40.8. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Ford also broke the tape at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 17:19.1, and finished 21st nationally at the Nike Cross Nationals Finals, earning All-American honors. She also won the Devils Lake Invitational, the Hi-Liner Invitational, the "Orr"ignals Invitational and the Western Dakota Association championship.

A devoted member of her church community, Ford has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, Operation Christmas Child, a Vacation Bible School and suicide-prevention initiatives. "Meghan has shown the ability to overcome adversity," said Jamestown coach Ken Gardner. "At the Roy Griak Invitational, she didn't have the race she was hoping for, but she bounced back strong, winning the conference meet, the state meet and the Nike Heartland Regional. She's been an excellent example to her teammates of what it takes to succeed."

Ford has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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.

Two-time winner Ford joins Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Kelby Rinas (2017-18, Mandan High School), Karly Ackley (2016-17 & 2014-15, Grand Forks Central High School), and Mattie Shirley-Fairbairn (2015-16, Bismarck High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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