

**BROKEN ARROW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 **Payton Hinkle of Broken Arrow High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Hinkle is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Broken Arrow 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 Hinkle as Oklahoma'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, Hinkle 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 Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 18:03.44, breaking the tape 27.25 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. Hinkle also won the Missouri Southern Stampede and she ran against the boys in the Oklahoma Track and Cross Country Coaches Association Meet of Champions, finishing 53rd with a time that would have won the girls race that same day by more than a minute. She was the 2019 The Oklahoman All-City Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year.

Hinkle has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Payton was extremely dominant in 6A cross country," said Debbie Williams, head coach of Sapulpa High. "She starts her races aggressively, which is a definite strength."

Hinkle 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.

Hinkle joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Sophia Maag (2018-19, Norman High School), Rilee Rigdon (2017-18, Bartlesville High School), and Cheyenne Walden (2016-17, 2015-16 & 2014-15, Charles Page High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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