

**ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 **Ava Dobson of St. Joseph's Catholic High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Dobson is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph's Catholic 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 Dobson as South Carolina'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, Dobson 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 the Class 2A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:58.3, leading the Knights to second place as a team. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Dobson took second at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 16:55 and finished 23rd nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships. She also won the Wendy's Invitational and the Mike Moore Lake Murray Invitational.

Dobson has participated in a service-mission trip to Guatemala and has volunteered locally on behalf of Triune Mercy Center helping the homeless and low-income residents. "Ava came back this season stronger and faster than ever, and she had her best year," said St. Joseph's coach Marie Kernell. "She doesn't rest on her laurels at practice. She works just as hard or harder than her teammates while encouraging them to work hard, too."

Dobson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at the University of North Carolina 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.

Three-time winner Dobson joins Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Cate Ambrose (2016-17, Riverside High School), Logan Morris (2015-16 & 2014-15, Spartanburg Christian Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

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