

**LENNOX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 27, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Ali Bainbridge of Lennox High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Bainbridge is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Lennox 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 Bainbridge as South 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, Bainbridge 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 Class A state meet this past season with a time of 18:54.63, breaking the tape 6.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Orioles to a sixth-place finish as a team. Bainbridge won eight of 11 races on the season and was the state's top finisher at the prestigious Roy Griak Invitational in Minnesota. She took 72nd at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships.

A member of the Lennox High student council, Bainbridge has volunteered locally with the Best Buddies program and has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives with her church youth group. "Ali Bainbridge was a strong frontrunner this season who took command of nearly every race she was in," said Matt Coy, head coach of Beresford High. "She was fearless—never afraid to lead a race regardless of course difficulty."

Bainbridge 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.

Bainbridge joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Ellie Abraham (2018-19 & 2017-18, Brookings High School), Laura Nelson (2016-17, Gayville-Volin High School), Ella Byers (2015-16, Chamberlain High School) and Emily Hawkes (2014-15, Madison High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Bainbridge 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).