

**JOHN CHAMPE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Bethany Graham of John Champe High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Graham is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from John Champe 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 Graham as Virginia'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, Graham 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-5 senior won the Class 6 state meet title this past season with a time of 17:42, breaking the tape 34 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Knights to a second-place finish as a team. Graham took third at the Foot Locker South Regional championships and she finished 20th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Graham has volunteered locally with Sources of Strength, a program designed to increase mental health awareness and support suicide prevention in teenagers. She has also donated her time as the sports editor of the John Champe High yearbook and as a youth running coach. "What makes Bethany a strong runner is grit and heart," said Dave Davis, head coach of Colgan High. "She will take it to the competition and make each of them an honest racer. She is very determined and smart."

Graham has maintained a weighted 4.25 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Furman University 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.

Graham joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Mary Caroline Heinen (2018-19, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School), Olivia Beckner (2017-18, South Lakes High School), Kate Murphy (2016-17, Lake Braddock High School), Weini Kelati (2015-16, Heritage High School) and Libby Davidson (2014-15, E.C. Glass High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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