

**ONALASKA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 **Kora Malecek of Onalaska High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Malecek is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Onalaska 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 Malecek as Wisconsin'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, Malecek 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-2 junior won the Division 1 state meet this past season with a meet-record time of 17:44.6, breaking the tape 29.6 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Hilltoppers to a second-place finish as a team. Malecek finished sixth at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships and crossed the line in 30th place at the Nike Cross Nationals Finals.

Malecek has volunteered locally at an animal hospital and a veterinarian science academy. She has also donated her time to the Salvation Army and as a youth running coach. "What makes Kora a strong runner is her ability to focus on her race and overcome any doubt in her abilities as a championship competitor," said Don Krupa, head coach of Hudson High. "She is a very dedicated individual."

Malecek has maintained a 3.99 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.

Malecek joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Genevieve Nashold (2018-19, Madison West High School), Dana Feyen (2017-18, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau High School), Meghan Scott (2016-17, Divine Savior Holy Angels High School), Aubrey Roberts (2015-16, Memorial High School) and Annie Frisbie (2014-15, River Falls High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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