

**PINECREST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (April 8, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Carmen Alder of Pinecrest High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Alder is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Pinecrest 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 Alder as North Carolina's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in April, Alder joins an elite alumni association of 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 state's three-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-8-inch senior distance talent led the Patriots to their 29th straight Sandhills Athletic Conference title this past season and a seventh-place finish at the state meet, where she captured a third consecutive individual championship by breaking the tape in 17:47.30. Just the fifth girl in state history to three-peat at states, Alder clocked North Carolina's fastest girls 5K time—and the only mark under 17 minutes—with a 16:58.90 back in September. She was unbeaten against in-state competition in 2020 and took fifth at the National XC Town USA Meet of Champions to earn First Team All-American status. A four-time All-State selection in cross country, Alder now owns 11 individual state titles between cross country and track and field. She finished 11th nationally in the final 2020 MileSplit50 girls cross country rankings, and her state meet speed rating according to Dyestat and TullyRunners.com ranked No. 10 nationally. Both of her parents ran competitively at Brigham Young University and her mother, Janeth Alder (née Caizalitin), competed in the women's 3000-meter event for Ecuador at the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona.

President of her local Venture Crew youth service chapter, Alder has donated her time to multiple community service projects, including the beautification of Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve and an equine-assisted therapy program for military veterans. An active member of her church community, she has volunteered on behalf of special needs peers, a summer camp and the Special Olympics Moore County Spring Games. "Carmen has proven herself as one of the most decorated distance talents in North Carolina history," said Erik Boal, an editor at Dyestat.com. "She was 2.4 seconds off medal pace at the national USA Meet of Champions, then won her next six races to grab a third state title."

Alder has maintained a 3.79 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at BYU 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 & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, who work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Three-time winner Alder joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Mariah Howlett (2017-18, Lake Norman Charter School), and Nevada Mareno (2016-17, Leesville Road High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Alder has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Alder is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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