

**JAMESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Meghan Ford of Jamestown High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Ford is the first Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Jamestown 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 Ford as North Dakota'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, Ford 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 5-foot-6 senior won the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:59. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Player of the Year, Ford also won the Orriginals Invitational, the Mandan Kiwanis Invitational and the Western Dakota Association championship. She took 13th at the XC Town USA Meet of Champions.

A devoted member of her church community, Ford has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, Operation Christmas Child, a vacation bible school and suicide-prevention initiatives. "Ever since Meghan joined the Blue Jay teams as a seventh grader, she has put in the time necessary to be successful," said Jamestown coach Ken Gardner. "She proves that hard work and dedication can lead to great accomplishments."

Ford has maintained a 3.93 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field 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 & 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 Ford joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Kelby Rinas (2017-18, Mandan High School), and Karly Ackley (2016-17, Grand Forks Central High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Ford has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Ford 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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