

**AMERICAN FORK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE UTAH BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 26, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Daniel Simmons** of **American Fork High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Simmons is the fifth Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from American Fork High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation's top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Simmons as Utah's best high school boys cross country player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11 & 2009-10, Carl Sandburg High School, Ill.) and Edward Cheserek (2012-13, St. Benedict's Preparatory School, N.J.).

The 5-foot-10, 125-pound senior authored a remarkable campaign, including a commanding victory by 10 seconds at the Nike Cross Southwest Regional Championships, winning in a time of 14:41.13 this past season. Simmons followed that up by leading the Cavemen to the team silver medal at the NXN Final. A two-time Gatorade award winner and the returning Gatorade National Player of the Year, he broke the 14:50 barrier a mind-boggling five times this season with four of those races occurring at high altitude. He clocked the nation's fastest 3-mile (14:41.14) and 5K (14:44.0) among prep boys this season, won 10 races and broke six course records in 2023.

Having relocated from Idaho after sophomore year, Simmons has volunteered locally at the public library, reading to children during their weekly story hour. He remains extensively involved in his church youth group and its community service initiatives. While at Salmon High School (Idaho) as a freshman and sophomore, he was a member of the audition-only school choir and performed and danced in the school musical Newsies, then served as the sound and light technician for a production of Beauty and the Beast. He served as vice president of his freshman class and as sophomore class president in addition to donating his time as an officer in a community drug free youth program. He has also volunteered many hours both chopping and stacking wood for the elderly and sand-bagging to protect against flooding. Simmons has organized fundraisers for both young people and the needy, providing meals for the homeless. In American Fork, he also works at a local running store. "Daniel Simmons turned in another All-American season in what is arguably the most talent-rich state in prep distance running," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "His meet record run at the state meet clinched the team title and his win at NXR Southwest is another jewel on his scorchingly fast 2023 racing resume."

Simmons has maintained a 3.93 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Brigham Young 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, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner Simmons joins recent Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Jefferson McMullin (2021-22, Lehi High School), Creed Thompson (2020-21, Skyridge High School) and Carson Belnap (2019-20, Stansbury High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.