

## **MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 10, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Daniel Harkin of Manhattan High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Harkin is the first Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Manhattan 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 Harkin as Kansas' best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Harkin 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 6-foot-1, 175-pound junior distance talent won the KSHSAA 6A state title this past season with the fastest all-class time of the day, breaking the tape in 15:25.30—32.8 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor—and leading the Indians to a fourth-place finish as a team. With his personal-best clocking of 15:11.50 in winning the Missouri Southern Stampede, he broke his school record by more than 30 seconds, running the state's fastest 5K of 2019 by a prep male. A two-time All-State honoree, he also took fourth in the Varsity Gold Race at the Rim Rock Classic last fall.

An elite USTA age-group talent, Harkin has donated his time providing free tennis lessons and instruction to young players in his community. Also a piano student, he is a member of the MHS choir and has volunteered locally on behalf of road races. "In addition to being an incredibly gifted and hard-working athlete, Daniel is one of the most considerate and polite student-athletes on our team," said Susan Melgares, head coach at Manhattan High. "He enjoys competition at the highest levels, and is gracious regardless of a race's outcome. He appreciates the successes of his teammates and opponents as much as his own. He is a supportive presence and can be counted on to keep smiling in the face of adversity and give his best effort."

Harkin has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

Harkin joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Ethan Marshall (2018-19 & 2017-18, St. Thomas Aquinas High School), Will Cole (2016-17, Saint Thomas Aquinas), Belesti Akalu (2015-16, Shawnee Mission North High School) and Stuart McNutt (2014-15, Blue Valley West High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Harkin has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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