

**ALLENTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 10, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Liam Murphy of Allentown High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Murphy is the first Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Allentown 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 Murphy as New Jersey's 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, Murphy 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-10, 128-pound senior raced to the state Meet of Champions individual title this past season with a time of 15:23. Murphy followed up by taking eighth nationally at the Nike Cross Nationals Final, earning All-American honors in the process. He also broke the tape at the Shore Coaches Invitational, the Manhattan Invitational and the Sectional championships, in addition to finishing second at the Group 3 championships. Murphy also took third at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships and crossed the line 25th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Murphy has volunteered locally on behalf of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. "Liam has enjoyed some amazing successes, magnified by the fact that he played soccer until just last year," said Allentown coach Rick Smith. "He has developed a strong sense of his capabilities and worked his tail off to accomplish every one of his very ambitious goals last fall."

Murphy has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Villanova 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 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.

Murphy joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Jack Stanley (2018-19, West Morris Mendham High School), Devin Hart (2017-18, Point Pleasant Borough High School), Elliot Gindi (2016-17, Ocean Township High School), Joshua Clark (2015-16, Highland Regional High School) and Nikhil Pulimood (2014-15, West Windsor-Plainsboro South High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Murphy 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.