

**MUSTANG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Gabe Simonsen of Mustang High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Simonsen is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mustang 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 Simonsen as Oklahoma'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, Simonsen 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-6, 120-pound junior won the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 15:39.89, breaking the tape 22.64 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Broncos to a fourth-place finish as a team. Simonsen took 18th at the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championships and crossed the line 35th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships.

Simonsen has volunteered locally at an orphanage, and has donated his time on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Gabe is a consistent runner," said Scott Downard, head coach of Westmoore High. "His championship-season racing was dominant. He's a smart and diligent runner who is learning to be patient in order to outlast other runners at the end of a long season."

Simonsen has maintained a weighted 4.07 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.

Simonsen joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Sam Bass (2018-19, Casady School), Luke Murphy (2017-18, Lincoln Christian High School), Matt Young (2016-17, Jenks High School), Isai Rodriguez (2015-16, Ringwood High School) and Ben Barrett (2014-15, Norman North High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Simonsen 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.