

**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Josh Edwards of University High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Edwards is the third Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from University 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 Edwards as West Virginia'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, Edwards 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-7, 120-pound sophomore won the Class AAA state meet this past season with a time of 15:50.06, breaking the tape 14.15 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Hawks to a first-place finish as a team. Edwards took 15th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships and won five of seven races on the season. He did not lose to an in-state competitor all year.

Edwards has volunteered locally with the Special Olympics and as a youth running coach. "I have seen enough elite runners to learn the look that the great ones have in their eyes and this year Josh had it," said Jacob Galik, head coach of Wheeling Park High. "Nothing is given in cross country, there is no luck. Every time we saw Josh, every time the gun was about to go off, he knew what he was about to do and he did it, in every race and in the biggest moments."

Edwards has maintained an unweighted 4.05 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Edwards joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Aaron Withrow (2018-19, Winfield High School), Chris Barbera (2017-18, Woodrow Wilson High School), Philip White (2016-17, University High School), and Seth Edwards (2015-16 & 2014-15, University High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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