

## **WEST SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VIRGINIA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 21, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Allie Horner of West Springfield High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their excellence in sport, academics and community. The award recognizes Horner as Virginia's best high school girls cross country athlete, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, CA), Katelyn Tuohy (2017-18, 2018-19 & 2019-20, North Rockland High School, NY) and Jane Hedengren (2024-25, Timpview High School, UT).

The 5-foot-7 junior placed sixth at the Nike Cross Southeast Regional Championships this past season with a time of 17:14.2, 36.1 seconds ahead of her next-closest Virginia competitor. A two-time First Team All-State honoree, Horner placed third in the VHSL Class 6A state meet in leading the Spartans to a second-place team finish. She also placed 12th to be the top Virginia performer at the Great American Cross Country Festival, one of the nation's premier meets.

Horner has volunteered locally on behalf of Rise Against Hunger, where she and her family prepare thousands of bags filled with rice, vegetables and vitamins for distribution around the world. She also has donated her time with family in assembling homeless bags that are delivered to those in need in the streets. "Despite suffering a heat-related collapse down the stretch at the state meet, Allie Horner tightened the straps from there to re-establish herself as the state's best at Nike Cross Regionals," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Her personal-best showing at the Great American Cross Country Festival was further proof of her excellence."

Horner has maintained a 4.31 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one state winner from each of the 50 states and Washington D.C., in 12 different sports: football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls track & field. In total, 610 high school athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports. 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 winners in each sport.

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, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$6.4 million in grants to winners across more than 2,200 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://www.x.com/Gatorade).

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