

## **MINNETONKA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 13, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Sean Fries of Minnetonka High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Minnesota Boys 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 Fries as Minnesota's best high school boys cross country athlete, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Lukas Verzbicas (2009-10 & 2010-11, Carl Sandburg High School, IL) Edward Cheserek (2012-13, Saint Benedict's Preparatory School, NJ) and Charlie Vause (2024-25, Rio Rancho High School, NM).

The 5-foot-9, 145-pound senior took fifth at the Brooks XC Championships and 7th at NXN Nationals to become a dual First Team All-American this past season. Fries also broke the tape at NXN Heartland Regional and concluded the year ranked No. 7 nationally in both the MileSplit50 and the Dyestat 100. He won the Class 3A state title prior to the extended postseason and clocked a personal-best time of 14:22.2 last fall to win the Augusta Twilight XC Meet last fall.

Vice President of his school's Honor Society and a member of its Principal's Advisory Council, Fries has volunteered locally as part of the Unified Special Olympics participant, which pairs youth athletes with intellectually challenged peers in celebration of sport. He has also donated his time as a peer tutor and as a youth coach for the Tonka Track and Field League. "Sean Fries went from August to December without losing a race and finished his final prep campaign unbeaten against Minnesota competitors," said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack. "He dropped five sub-15 clockings in eight races and was about 11 and 16 seconds off national championship pace at last fall's premier season-ending meets."

Fries has maintained a weighted 4.74 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Stanford University 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](https://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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