

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 13, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Luke Hnatt of Christian Brothers Academy is the 2025-26 Gatorade New Jersey 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 Hnatt as New Jersey'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 6-foot-3, 155-pound senior won both the NJSIAA Meet of Champions and the Non-Public Class A individual championship this past season, clocking a personal-best time of 15:23.0 in the former and leading the Colts to the team title in both races. Hnatt also led the program to a third-place team finish at Nike Cross Nationals, where he took 17th individually to earn Third Team All-American honors. He was a top-four finisher in every race he ran last fall with the exception of nationals.

A member of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Hnatt has volunteered locally in association with the Best Day Foundation by teaching special needs children to surf, organizing flag football games and performing maintenance work at the Rising Trees at Oakhurst campground. He also has donated his time by organizing multiple food drives with the Fulfill Food Pantry and wrapping gifts for the needy through the Raine Foundation. "The Christian Brothers Academy distance program is second to none and Luke Hnatt was vital to preserving that tradition, capping his senior campaign unbeaten against in-state rivals while repeatedly leading the way in the team's successes," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Thanks to his example and leadership, the streak of excellence continues at CBA."

Hnatt has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Virginia 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 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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