

NORTH ROCKLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Claudel Chery of North Rockland High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade New York 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 Chery as New York'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-1, 155-pound senior won both the New York State Federation Championship and the NYSPHSAA Class A state meet this past season, clocking a personal-best time of 15:10.4 in the latter and leading the Raiders to the team title in both races. A two-time All-State performer, Chery helped clinch his team's bid to Nike Cross Nationals, where North Rockland finished 22nd. His triumph at the Shore Coaches Invitational was a highlight among his five race victories last fall.

A member of five academic honor societies on campus as well as the National Honor Society, Chery has volunteered locally through Varsity Athletes Against Substance Abuse, mentoring peers on campus and throughout the community to remain drug-free members of society. He has also donated his time with PULSE, a club that focuses on cultural understanding, expression and inclusivity in education through arts-based learning. "Claudel Chery's resolve allowed him to prevail in multiple down-to-the-wire championship races last fall, helping to cement a Federation state championship for his team and anchoring his squad's successful qualification for nationals," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack.

Chery has maintained a 3.87 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a college destination.

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, Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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