

BISMARCK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Owen Hintz of Bismarck High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Dakota 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 Hintz as North Dakota'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-2, 160-pound senior won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 15:27.8, breaking the tape 24.4 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Demons to the team title. Hintz also earned Second Team All-Region honors at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships with a ninth-place finish. He was the state's top finisher at the Brooks Cross Country Midwest Regional Championships, taking 31st in 16:21.5.

Hintz has volunteered locally on behalf of Ministry on the Margins and as a youth cross country meet marshal. He has also donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Owen is a special competitor," said Jason Holland, head coach of Davies High School. "He's one of the best distance runners that North Dakota has ever seen and has an impressive combination of natural ability along with an incredible work ethic."

Hintz has maintained a weighted 4.28 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate 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](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

###