# HERRIMAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
# GATORADE UTAH 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 Jackson Spencer of Herriman High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Utah 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 Spencer as Utah'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, 141-pound senior completed an unbeaten campaign by sweeping the individual titles at both premier national championship meets this past season, also leading his teams to a second-place finish at Nike Cross Nationals. Spencer won the UHSAA Class 6A state meet with a course-record time of 14:29.8, breaking the tape 47.7 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor to anchor the Mustangs' team title. He ran the nation's fastest 3-mile and 5K times last fall at the Woodbridge Classic and Clovis Invitational, respectively, and was the top American high school finisher at the World Athletics U20 Championships, where he placed 18th.

An active member of the LDS Church and a practiced piano player, Spencer has donated his time as pace-setter at youth races and by fundraising for the Hearts of Gold charitable organization. He has volunteered locally by raking leaves and picking up trash in association with his church community. "From his early season victory on the West Coast at the Woodbridge Classic—the world's largest cross country meet—to his 8K PR at the 2026 U20 World Cross Country Championships, where he sparked Team USA to a bronze medal, Jackson Spencer's final high school distance campaign was truly historic," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "He proved his durability and mental discipline throughout six out-of-state meets across three time zones in a nine-race season. As a testament to his level of excellence, Jackson shattered three, revered meet records held by former Gatorade National and State Player of the Year honorees. He continually raised the bar for excellence to new levels last fall."

Spencer has maintained a 3.92 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Brigham Young University, but will complete a two-year LDS mission prior to that.

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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