

## **CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VERMONT 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 Ben Holoch of Champlain Valley Union High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Vermont 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 Holoch as Vermont'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, 140-pound junior won the Division 1 state meet this past season with a time of 16:32.4, breaking the tape 7.6 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the RedHawks to the team title. Holoch also earned Second Team All-Region honors at the Brooks Cross Country Northeast Regional Championships by finishing 11th. He was Vermont's top runner at the New England Cross Country Championships, where he received All-New England recognition, and at the Nike Cross Northeast Regional Championships.

Holoch has volunteered locally with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. "Ben is extremely dedicated to running and works hard to be at his best all year long," said David Baird, head coach of Champlain Valley Union High School. "He works incredibly hard in every practice and goes above and beyond what is expected."

Holoch has maintained a 4.08 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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