

CLOVER HILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Joshua Taylor of Clover Hill High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Virginia 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 Taylor as Virginia'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 5-foot-10, 170-pound senior won the VHSL Class 5 state meet this past season, clocking a time of 15:44.1 to break the tape 30.9 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. Taylor also took fourth at the Nike Cross Southeast Regional, earning First Team All-Region honors and a bid to Nike Cross Nationals, where he finished 47th. He ran a personal-best 14:58.3 and placed fifth in the Race of Champions at the Great American XC Festival and took eighth at the VA XC Showcase.

Taylor has volunteered locally mentoring youth runners in the training and tactics of racing. "Joshua Taylor's path to success was about mapping out a competitive racing schedule that reaped its biggest rewards come the postseason," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Battle tested and ready, he had runaway success at the state meet before excelling in his regional to punch a ticket to nationals."

Taylor has maintained a weighted 4.37 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at The College of William and Mary 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, Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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