

DEFOREST AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 Lucas Tanner of DeForest Area High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Wisconsin 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 Tanner as Wisconsin'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, 140-pound senior earned Third Team All-America honors at both of the premier national championship meets this past season, finishing 12th at the Brooks Cross Country Championships and 20th at Nike Cross Nationals. Tanner also took second at the WIAA Division 1 state meet a week after setting a course record with a personal-best 15:21.8 performance at the Sectional 4 meet. The winner in 8 of his 13 races last fall, he took second at the Brooks Midwest Regional and sixth at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional, earning First Team All-Region recognition at both.

An active member in his school's chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America, Tanner has volunteered locally working with autistic students at a basketball camp. He has also donated his time working at junior varsity track and field meets. "Going from an unknown on the national cross country scene to one of just eight preps to become a dual All-American in 2025, Lucas Tanner evolved into America's most improved distance talent last fall," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Becoming just the fourth Wisconsin prep to achieve All-American status at both national meets in a single year, he authored a rapid ascent that serves as proof and inspiration to any young runner that focus and commitment can bring seemingly unrealistic goals within grasp."

Tanner has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Furman University (S.C.) 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](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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