

ST. ALBANS SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

**CHICAGO** (May 10, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Damian Hackett of St. Albans School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Hackett is the fifth Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Albans School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Hackett as District of Columbia's best high school boys cross country player. Hackett joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg High School, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 6-foot, 130-pound senior raced to third place at the VA Elite Invitational this past season, clocking a personal-best time of 15:21.6 as the meet's top finisher from the District. Hackett also took 27th at the national XC Town USA Meet of Champions. As a junior, he finished second at the D.C. State Athletic Association championships and was selected First Team All-Met by the Washington Post.

Co-editor of the school yearbook and co-captain of the Robotics Team, Hackett has volunteered locally on behalf of a soup kitchen and Neighbors Helping Neighbors. "Damian has been completely undaunted by what the last year has entailed," said St. Albans coach Jim Ehrenhaft. "He has approached his training with his customary determination and focus, and has run personal bests in almost every competition in which he's taken part."

Hackett has maintained an A average in the classroom. He will attend Cornell University this fall, where he will compete in cross country and track and field.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Hackett joins recent Gatorade District of Columbia Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Cullen Capuano (2019-20, Gonzaga College High School), Luke Tewart (2018-19, Washington Latin Public Charter School), Gavin McElhennon (2017-18, Gonzaga College High School), and Harry Monroe (2016-17, Gonzaga College High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hackett has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Hackett is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [www.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://www.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###