

**NATALIE COOK NAMED 2021-22 GATORADE NATIONAL
GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

Flower Mound, TX [February 2, 2022] - In its 37th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Natalie Cook of Flower Mound High School in Flower Mound, TX is the 2021-22 Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Cook won the prestigious award for her accomplishments on and off the field, joining an impressive group of former Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Players of the Year who have combined for eight National Championships and five bronze medals.

Cook was surprised with the trophy by her family, coaches and teammates at school. Check out a video of the announcement [here](#).

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 Cook as the nation's best high school girls cross country runner. The Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others to evaluate candidates, selected Cook from nearly 300,000 other student-athletes who compete in girls cross country nationwide.

Competition for the national award was fierce. Cook topped the list of state winners in girls cross country who collectively boast an incredible list of accomplishments, including 13 returning state Gatorade Players of the Year, 24 with signed National Letters of Intent to run at Division I colleges/universities and 28 with a GPA of 4.0 and above.

"At the season's start, Natalie Cook was a top-20 or so competitor nationally, and she finished third at the prestigious Woodbridge Invitational in California," says Doug Binder, Dyestat.com Editor-in-Chief. "By December, she was the most dominant prep runner in the country. Her progress through the season propelled her to some amazing achievements, including becoming the first prep girl to win national titles in back-to-back weekends. She scorched the RunningLane championships course with the second-fastest 5K on record, then beat the strongest field of the year at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships, which left no doubt about who was the top gun in 2021."

The 5-foot-5 senior won an unprecedented two national titles this past season, capturing the Garmin RunningLane Cross Country Championships with a time of 16:04 and breaking the tape at the Eastbay Cross Country Championships in 17:15. Cook also won the Class 6A individual state championship in 16:32.4, leading the Jaguars to the state title as a team. She added victories at the Eastbay South Regional Championships, the Region 1 championships and the District 6 championships, while placing third at the Woodbridge Classic. No prep girl has ever won the two culminating national championship races in a single cross country season.

Cook has volunteered extensively on behalf of local middle school cross country programs in addition to coaching and instructing youth track athletes every summer.

Cook has maintained a weighted 3.63 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Oklahoma State University this fall.

"It's really an amazing accomplishment to see your name on the Gatorade National Player of the Year trophy, next to so many greats like Jordan Hasay, Molly Seidel and Katelyn Tuohy," said Gatorade Senior Vice President and General Manager Brett O'Brien. "All the hard work has paid off as Natalie is now a forever part of the Gatorade family and sports history."

Each year, a selection committee evaluates the nation's top talent to choose one state winner from each of the 50 states as well as 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 all, 608 athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. 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. Previous winners include a distinguished list of athletes, such as Peyton Manning, Abby Wambach, Jayson Tatum, Elena Delle Donne and many other sports icons.

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 Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

PREVIOUS GATORADE NATIONAL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR WINNERS			
YEAR	NAME	HOMETOWN	STATUS
2020-21	Sydney Thorvaldson	Rawlins, WY	University of Arkansas
2019-20	Katelyn Tuohy	Thiells, NY	North Carolina State University
2018-19	Katelyn Tuohy	Thiells, NY	North Carolina State University
2017-18	Katelyn Tuohy	Thiells, NY	North Carolina State University
2016-17	Brie Oakley	Aurora, CO	Ran for University of California, Berkeley
2015-16	Katie Rainsberger	Colorado Springs, CO	Ran for University of Washington
2014-15	Anna Rohrer	Mishawaka, IN	Ran for University of Notre Dame
2013-14	Alexa Efraimson	Camas, WA	Nike
2012-13	Sara Baxter	Simi Valley, CA	Ran for University of Oregon
2011-12	Molly Seidel	Hartland, WI	Puma
2010-11	Aisling Cuffe	Cornwall, NY	Saucony
2009-10	Megan Goethals	Rochester Hills, MI	Ran for University of Washington
2008-09	Jordan Hasay	San Luis Obispo, CA	Nike
2007-08	Ashley Brasovan	Wellington, FL	Hoka One One

About Gatorade

The Gatorade Company, a division of PepsiCo (NASDAQ: PEP), meets the needs of consumers who participate in Sports and Fitness, through brands that include Gatorade, Propel, Muscle Milk, Evolve and Bolt24. The solutions they provide are driven by a deep understanding of the unique needs and occasions of different types of sports and fitness. Gatorade, their marquee brand, is underpinned by more than 50-year history of studying the best athletes in the world and sports-nutrition research by the Gatorade Sport Science Institute, allowing it to provide scientifically-formulated products that meet athletes' needs both on and off the field. For more information and a full list of products, please visit www.gatorade.com.

About PepsiCo

PepsiCo products are enjoyed by consumers more than one billion times a day in more than 200 countries and territories around the world. PepsiCo generated \$70 billion in net revenue in 2020, driven by a complementary beverage and convenient foods portfolio that includes Lays, Doritos, Cheetos, Gatorade, Pepsi-Cola, Mountain Dew, Quaker, and SodaStream. PepsiCo's product portfolio includes a wide range of enjoyable foods and beverages, including many iconic brands that generate more than \$1 billion each in estimated annual retail sales.

Guiding PepsiCo is our vision to Be the Global Leader in Beverages and Convenient Foods by Winning with PepsiCo Positive (pep+). pep+ is our strategic end-to-end transformation that puts sustainability at the center of how we will create value and growth by operating within planetary boundaries and inspiring positive change for planet and people. For more information, visit www.pepsico.com.

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**FLOWER MOUND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 24, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Natalie Cook** of **Flower Mound High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Cook is the first Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Flower Mound High 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 Cook as Texas's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, Cook 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 5-foot-5 senior won an unprecedented two national titles this past season, capturing the Garmin Running Lane Cross Country Championships with a time of 16:04 and breaking the tape at the Eastbay Cross Country Championships in 17:15. Cook also won the Class 6A individual state championship in 16:32.4, leading the Jaguars to the state title as a team. She added victories at the Eastbay South Regional Championships, the Region 1 championships and the District 6 championships, while placing third at the Woodbridge Classic. No prep girl has ever won the two culminating national championship races in a single cross country season.

Cook has volunteered extensively on behalf of local middle school cross country programs in addition to coaching and instructing youth track athletes every summer. "Natalie Cook is a great competitor as well as a special young lady," said Jennifer Gegogaine, coach at Prosper High School. "Her resilience and perseverance are admirable. I've been able to witness her accomplish many great things this year."

Cook has maintained a weighted 3.63 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Oklahoma State University this fall.

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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Cook joins recent Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Brynn Brown (2020-21, Guyer High School), Colleen Stegmann (2019-20, Reedy High School), and London Culbreath (2018-29 & 2017-18, McKinney North High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Cook has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Cook is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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