

**FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW JERSEY GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 23, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Emma Zawatski** of **Freehold Township High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Zawatski is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Freehold Township 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 Zawatski as New Jersey'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 January, Zawatski joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Natalie Cook (2021-22, Flower Mound High School, Flower Mound, Texas), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

The 5-foot-7 junior raced to the individual title at the state Meet of Champions this past season with a time of 18:38. Zawatski also won the Group 4 individual championship, leading the Patriots to the team title, as well as the New Balance Shore Coaches Invitational and the Shore Conference Championships. She took 10th at the Champs Sports Northeast Regional Championships and competed at a pair of national meets, finishing 23rd at the Champs Sports National Championships in San Diego.

Zawatski has volunteered locally with the Manalapan Teen Leadership Committee coordinating Earth Day trash pickup and has served as a Blessing Bag Brigade volunteer, organizing gift bags to hand out to the needy. She has also donated her time as a coach for Rally Cap Sports, working with children and adults with special needs teaching them to play basketball in addition to coaching on behalf of the Freehold Township Recreation Youth Track and Field program. "Emma Zawatski continued to build confidence as the season progressed and, following several strong postseason performances, signaled she could be one of the top competitors in the Northeast this fall as well as nationally," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "After winning the New Jersey Meet of Champions, Zawatski fared well against a deep field at the Champs Sports Northeast Regional and gained valuable experience racing at a pair of national championship events."

Zawatski has maintained a 4.65 weighted GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Zawatski joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Angelina Perez (2021-22, Lakeland Regional High School), Charlotte Bednar (2020-21 & 2019-20, The Lawrenceville School), and Abby Loveys (2018-19, Randolph High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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

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