

KIRTLAND CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW MEXICO BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 11, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Kashon Harrison of Kirtland Central High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Harrison is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Kirtland Central 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 Harrison as New Mexico's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Harrison joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park High School, Ill.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The state's returning Gatorade Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-6, 115-pound senior won the Class 4A state meet this past season with a time of 15:27.35, breaking the tape 39.20 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Broncos to a fourth-place finish as a team. Harrison won the Foot Locker West Regional championships for a second straight year, then earned All-American status by finishing 11th at the FLCCC. He also took fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships.

Harrison has volunteered locally as a youth running coach. "Kashon has put in the time and effort needed to be a great runner," said Wilbert Nez, head coach of Gallup High. "I've seen him improve on his running throughout his year in high school."

Harrison has maintained a weighted 3.05 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Two-time winner Harrison joins Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jordan Lesensee (2016-17, Albuquerque Academy), Andrew Bosquez (2015-16, Hobbs High School), Niles Thomas (2014-15, Miyamura High School), and Colin Hemez (2013-14, Los Alamos High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Harrison has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

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.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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