

**KALAHEO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE HAWAII GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 27, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Emily Naylor of Kalaheo High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year**. Naylor is the first Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Kalaheo 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 Naylor as Hawaii's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in February, Naylor joins an elite alumni association of past 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 sophomore won the state meet this past season with a time of 19:37.87, breaking the tape 20.43 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Mustangs to a sixth-place finish as a team. Naylor, who finished 99th at the state meet as a freshman, won eight of the 10 races she competed in this past fall. She was also the top Hawaii finisher at the Foot Locker West Regional championships.

A long-time member of the Girls Scouts of the USA, Naylor has volunteered locally as part of a blood-donation drive with the Navy Junior ROTC. She has also served on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Emily was the strongest runner in our league," said Dennis Swart, head coach of Kaiser High. "Her state championship victory showed that she was very strong and determined, revealing a very competitive nature."

Naylor has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior 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 and 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.

Naylor joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Chloe Gangnath (2018-19, Seabury Hall), Veronica Winham (2017-18 & 2016-17, Seabury Hall), Amanda Beaman (2015-16, Iolani School) and Lisa Tashiro (2014-15, Kaiser High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Naylor has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).