

ANCHORAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALASKA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 10, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Tristian Merchant of Anchorage Christian School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Merchant is the first Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Anchorage Christian 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 Merchant as Alaska'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, Merchant 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-10, 145-pound junior raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:27.9. Merchant took sixth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships and finished 13th nationally at the NXN Final, earning All-American honors. He also broke the tape at the Region 3 championships, the Wasilla Trailblazer Invitational, the Palmer Invitational and the Frank Dieckgraef Invitational.

Merchant has volunteered locally on behalf of Anchorage Rescue Mission as well as youth running programs. "Tristian Merchant is a model athlete," said Anchorage Christian coach Jake Moe. "He works hard and pushes his teammates to be better. He's become a student of his sport and has found new ways to make himself better."

Merchant has maintained a 3.77 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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 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.

Merchant joins recent Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Daniel Bausch (2018-19, Chugiak High School), Jacob Moos (2017-18, Galena High School), Gus Schumacher (2016-17, Service High School), Kaleb Korta (2015-16, Galena High School) and Levi Thomet (2014-15, Kodiak High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Merchant 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.