

**BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS 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 Lukas Pabst of Bentonville High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Pabst is the fourth Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville 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 Pabst as Arkansas' 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, Pabst 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 6-foot, 150-pound senior won the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 15:21.9, breaking the tape 13.7 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Tigers to a first-place finish as a team. A seven-time state champion including both cross country and track and field, Pabst finished third at the Chile Pepper Cross Country Festival, and crossed the line 63rd at the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championships.

Pabst is a member of the Bentonville High School Orchestra and has reached the rank of Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America. He also owns two small businesses—Neat Freak Auto Detailing and The Lawn Guys—and he has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Lukas is one of the most dedicated and focused athletes that I have ever coached," said Michael Power, head coach of Bentonville High. "He is one of those students that you simply don't want to graduate and move on from your program."

Pabst has maintained a weighted 4.05 GPA in the classroom. He is planning on taking a mission trip through his church after he graduates high school this spring.

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.

Pabst joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Camren Fischer (2018-19, 2017-18, & 2016-17, Fayetteville High School), and T.J. Sugg (2015-16 & 2014-15, Har-Ber High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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