

## **ROCKHURST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSOURI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 10, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Wes Porter of Rockhurst High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Porter is the second Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Rockhurst 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 Porter as Missouri'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, Porter joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verbicas (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-1, 160-pound senior distance talent won the MSHSAA Class 4 state title this past season, breaking the tape in a course-record 15:07.40—13.9 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor—and leading the Hawklets to a sixth-place finish as a team. A three-time All-State selection, Porter clocked the fourth sub-15 5K time in Missouri Prep history at the Class 4 Sectional meet (a personal-best 14:53.90), which ranks as the third-fastest time ever by a Missouri high school boy at that distance, according to MileSplitMO. Unbeaten by an in-state opponent in 2019, he also took 12th at the NXN Midwest Regional championships with a time of 15:26.10.

A participant in service-mission trips to Costa Rica and Cambodia, Porter has donated his time to the Harvesters food bank, Heartland Camp Friendship, a Native American community in Oklahoma and as a transportation assistant for elderly parishioners of the Second Presbyterian Church. He has also volunteered locally at the Children's Center for the Visually Impaired and at a summer camp supporting adults with autism. "Wes is one of the most decorated runners in school history," said Michael Dierks, head coach at Rockhurst High. "He is willing to work in the weight room, on the track and hit the roads. He is constantly looking for ways to get better and loves the competitive moment. What speaks to me the most about Wes is his humility and kindness, which he freely shares with his teammates and classmates."

Porter has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Virginia 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.

Porter joins recent Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Christian Baker (2018-19, Kirkwood High School), Victor Mugeche (2017-18, Blue Springs High School), Austin Hindman (2016-17, Lafayette High School), Ben Naeger (2015-16, Ste. Genevieve High School) and Michael Karls (2014-15, Festus High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Porter 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](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).