

**MENDON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Sam Lawler of Mendon High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Lawler is the first Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mendon 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 Lawler as New York'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, Lawler 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-9, 135-pound senior raced to the Class B individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:26.1, leading the Vikings to second place as a team. Lawler took second at the Nike Cross Nationals New York Regional championships in 15:55 and finished 16th at the national NXN Final, earning All-American honors in the process. He also won at the New York Federation championships, the Section 5 championships and the McQuaid Invitational.

Lawler has volunteered locally on behalf of his school's Interact Club, a community service club affiliated with Rotary International. "From the moment Sam entered high school, incredible expectations have accompanied his every step," said Pittsford Mendon coach Chris Compson. "He's displayed a maturity well beyond his years, and despite all his individual accomplishments, he's always been a consummate teammate."

Lawler has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Syracuse University 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.

Lawler joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year Parker Stokes (2018-19, Maine-Endwell High School), Mason Gatewood (2017-18, St. Anthony's High School), Ty Brownlow (2016-17, Liverpool High School), Ben Petrella (2015-16, Liverpool High School) and Bryce Millar (2014-15, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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