

**VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (April 8, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Crawford West of Vestavia Hills High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. West is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Vestavia Hills 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 West as Alabama's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in April, West joins an elite alumni association of 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-2 junior won the Jesse Owens Classic this past season in 17:34.29, which ranked as the fastest 5K time in the state during the 2020 campaign. West also won the Southern Showcase, the Section 3 championship and the Tiger Classic.

A devoted member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, West has volunteered locally as a mentor for elementary school students and has raised funds to benefit the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. "Crawford is a very special runner," said Vestavia Hills coach Brett Huber. "She definitely doesn't settle for what she has already achieved, always pushing herself to do what she hasn't done yet."

West has maintained a 4.14 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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 & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

West joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Lainey Phelps (2019-20 & 2016-17, Homewood High School), Presley Miles (2018-19, Saint James School) and Amaris Tynnismaa (2017-18, Montgomery Catholic Preparatory School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," West has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. West is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://www.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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