

**ROGERS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (April 8, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Mia Loafman of Rogers High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Loafman is the third Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Rogers 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 Loafman as Arkansas'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, Loafman 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-3 sophomore placed second at the Class 6A state meet with a time of 18:39.14, leading the Mountaineers to a second place finish as a team. Loafman won five of seven meets against in-state competition and placed second in the other two. She finished fifth at the National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships in the High School Division, and she was eighth at the XC Town USA Meet of Champions.

Loafman has volunteered locally at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. "Mia has a great work ethic," said Carlton Efurud, head coach of Rogers High. "She has improved tremendously over the past year, putting in the extra miles it takes to be successful. She doesn't let the competition intimidate her."

Loafman has maintained a 3.89 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior 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.

Loafman joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Ali Nachtigal (2019-20 & 2018-19, Rogers High School) and Josie Carson (2017-18 & 2016-17, Lake Hamilton High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Loafman has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Loafman 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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