

**CHERRY CREEK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO 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 Riley Stewart of Cherry Creek High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Stewart is the second Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Cherry Creek 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 Stewart as Colorado'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, Stewart 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-11 junior raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:33.8, leading the Bruins to the state title as a team. Colorado's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Player of the Year, Stewart also won the Colorado Classic and the Region 1 championship. She took second at the XC Town USA Meet of Champions in 17:18 and finished third at the AAU National Championships with a time of 17:02.04

A member of her school's student-athlete leadership council, Stewart has volunteered locally on behalf of park clean-up initiatives. "Her toughness and hard work, combined with her natural abilities, make Riley a force to be reckoned with," said Ethan Dusto, head coach at Cherry Creek High. "Over three years of coaching, I can count on one hand the number of times that I've given her a workout that was too hard or that she couldn't complete, and even then I had to pull her out, because she would never pull herself out of a workout."

Stewart has maintained a 4.04 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.

Two-time winner Stewart joins recent Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Quinn McConnell (2018-19, Peak to Peak Charter School), Jenna Fitzsimmons (2017-18, Mountain Vista High School) and Brie Oakley (2016-17, Grandview High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Stewart has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Stewart 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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