

**KALAHEO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE HAWAII 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 Emily Naylor of Kalaheo High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Naylor is the first Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Kalaheo 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 Naylor as Hawaii'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, Naylor 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 junior won the state meet by more than 20 seconds back in 2019, improving from a 99th-place finish as a freshman to earn Gatorade Player of the Year honors a year ago. Naylor was also the state's top finisher at the 2019 Foot Locker West Regional championships with a personal-best time of 18:36.5. The 2020 Kalaheo High Female Student Athlete of the Year, Naylor ran her first half-marathon in the fall, finishing with a time of 1:28:08. HHSAA cancelled the 2020-21 cross country season due to pandemic-related concerns.

Naylor has volunteered locally on a weekly basis at a COVID vaccination clinic. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Emily is a one-of-a-kind student-athlete that every coach dreams of being able to have on their team," said Stan Roth, head coach of Kalaheo High. "Even though we did not have a season due to COVID, that hasn't slowed her down; she continues to train and was no doubt ready to break all her PR race times and raise the bar even higher for herself."

Naylor has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school this fall and will compete in outdoor track this spring.

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 works 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 Naylor joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Chloe Gangnath (2018-19, Seabury Hall) and Veronica Winham (2017-18 & 2016-2017, Seabury Hall) among the state's list of former award winners.

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