

**LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE INDIANA 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 Karina James of Lowell High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. James is the first Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Lowell 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 James as Indiana’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, James 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-5 junior raced to the individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:00.1. James also won the sectional, regional and semi-state championships, along with the New Prairie Invitational, the Harrison Invitational and the Bob Thomas Invitational.

A devoted member of her church’s youth group, James has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics. “Karina is truly a product of her own work ethic,” said Lowell coach Scott Coil. “She’s meticulous in her training, but her willingness to focus on all of the small things—those that end up making a big difference in the end—is what sets her apart.”

James has maintained a 4.18 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 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.

James joins recent Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Erin Strzelecki (2019-20, Bishop Dwenger High School), Emma Wilson (2018-19 & 2017-2018, Greencastle High School) and Tyler Schwartz (2016-17, DeKalb High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

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