

**MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 Ciara O'Shea of Madison Central High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. O'Shea is the first Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Madison Central 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 O'Shea as Kentucky'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, O'Shea 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-2 sophomore won the Class AAA state meet for a third straight year this past season with a time of 18:15.37, breaking the tape 41.82 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Indians to a 10th-place finish as a team. O'Shea also took 24th at the XC Town USA Meet of Champions. She has been the top Kentucky finisher in 25 of her 26 cross country races to date as a prep competitor.

O'Shea has volunteered locally on behalf of food drives and at a retirement community. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Ciara is a strong and confident runner who is mature beyond her years," said Tim Holman, head coach of DuPont Manual High. "She is also incredibly consistent and continues to thrive on the biggest stages."

O'Shea has maintained a weighted 4.13 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 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 O'Shea joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Ciara Karlee Hoffman (2018-19, Daviess County High School), Kaitlyn Lacy (2017-18, Louisville Male High School), and Michaela Reinhart (2016-17, Lexington Catholic High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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