

**OAKWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Grace Hartman of Oakwood High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Hartman is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Oakwood 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 Hartman as Ohio'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, Hartman 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-10 junior won the Division 2 state meet this past season with a time of 18:04.1, leading the Lumberjacks to a second place finish as a team. Hartman won seven of her nine races, including the Southwest District meet and the 2020 Midwest Challenge Meet. A NSAF All-American selection, she finished 20th at the XC Town USA Meet of Champions.

Hartman has volunteered with US International, which helps raise money to build water wells in Africa. She has donated her time locally as a lifeguard and as part of multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Grace Hartman is one very special runner," said Randy McKinney, head coach of Eaton High. "She is a competitor, not just someone with running talent that goes out to run a race. She goes out to compete and win, regardless of what that might take."

Hartman has maintained a 4.0 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, who 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.

Hartman joins recent Gatorade Ohio Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Taylor Ewert (2019-20 & 2018-19, Beavercreek High School), Morgan Gigandet (2017-18, Troy High School), and India Johnson (2016-17, Hilliard Davidson High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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