

**BROKEN ARROW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Payton Hinkle of Broken Arrow High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Hinkle is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Broken Arrow 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 Hinkle as Oklahoma'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, Hinkle 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-8 junior won the Class 6A state meet for a second straight year this past season with a time of 18:23.64, breaking the tape 10.7 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Tigers to a fifth place finish as a team. Hinkle also won the Arkansas vs. Oklahoma All-Star Meet by 34 seconds. She was the 2019 Tulsa World All-Metro Female Athlete of the Year and is a finalist for the publication's 2020 Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award.

Hinkle has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Payton is an extraordinary person and athlete," said Shane Messinger, head coach of Broken Arrow High. "She is a determined competitor who exemplifies how a relentless commitment to preparation can lead to great accomplishments."

Hinkle has maintained a weighted 4.38 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 Hinkle joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Sophia Maag (2018-19, Norman High School), Rilee Rigdon (2017-18, Bartlesville High School), and Cheyenne Walden (2016-17, Charles Page High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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