

**NATION FORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Katie Pou of Nation Ford High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Pou is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Nation Ford 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 Pou as South Carolina'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, Pou 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-4 senior won her fourth consecutive Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:27.25. Pou also captured the Region 3 championship, the York County championship and the Class 5A State Qualifier.

Pou has served as part of her school's student council and has volunteered locally on behalf of food donation drives and community clean-up initiatives. "Katie's drive to constantly improve is like no other athlete I've seen," said Nation Ford coach Jake Brenner. "She had some physical setbacks that kept her from being at her best at the start of the cross country season, but through determination and patience she was able to persevere and get back to her old self and claim her fourth consecutive individual state title."

Pou has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. She will attend the University of Pennsylvania this fall, where she will compete in cross country and track and field.

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.

Pou joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Ava Dobson (2019-20, 2018-19 & 2017-18, St. Joseph's Catholic High School), and Cate Ambrose (2016-17, Riverside High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Pou has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. Pou is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization she 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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