

**O'GORMAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Katie Castelli of O'Gorman High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Castelli is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from O'Gorman 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 Castelli as South Dakota'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, Castelli 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-2 senior finished second at the Division AA state meet this past season with a time of 18:24.94, leading the Knights to the state team title. Castelli won all seven of her races prior to the state meet, including the Heartland Preview and the Metro Conference Championships. She was a two-time All-State selection at St. Viator High in Arlington Heights, Ill., before moving to Sioux Falls in the middle of her junior year.

Castelli has volunteered locally as a youth running coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church. "With all the adversity, Katie remained positive and challenged herself to continue to improve as a runner," said Aaron Strand, head coach of O'Gorman High. "Katie shows up every day positive and ready to give it her all."

Castelli has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country and track at Santa Clara University 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.

Castelli joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Ali Bainbridge (2019-20, Lennox High School), Ellie Abraham (2018-19 & 2017-18, Brookings High School), and Laura Nelson (2016-17, Gayville-Volin High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Castelli has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. Castelli 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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