

**SCIENCE HILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 Jenna Hutchins of Science Hill High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Hutchins is the first Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Science Hill 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 Hutchins as Tennessee'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, Hutchins 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 Runner of the Year and a two-time Gatorade Tennessee Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, the 5-foot-3 junior set a national record at the RunningLane National Championships this past season. Hutchins became the first high school girl to break 16:00 in the 5K as her winning time of 15:58.42 knocked more than 8 seconds off the old mark. She also won the Division 1 Large School State Meet this past season with a time of 16:30.84, breaking the tape more than 90 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Hilltoppers to a 12th-place finish as a team. She opened the season with a junior class national record run of 9:49.83 in the 3,200-meter event at the Music City Distance Carnival and she set course records in all eight of her races in 2020.

An accomplished violinist, Hutchins has volunteered locally at the Johnson City Public Library and as a youth running coach. "Jenna is an extremely hard worker and such a determined athlete," said Evan Meeuwenberg, head coach of Science Hill High School. "She is dedicated and has persevered through the challenges of COVID this year which is remarkable."

Hutchins has maintained a weighted 4.29 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 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 Hutchins joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Sasha Neglia (2018-19 & 2017-18, Dobyons-Bennett High School), and Rebecca Story (2016-17, Christian Academy of Knoxville), among the state's list of former award winners.

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