

**ONALASKA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 Kora Malecek of Onalaska High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Malecek is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Onalaska 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 Malecek as Wisconsin'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, Malecek 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, the 5-foot-5 senior won the Division 1 state meet for a second straight season in 2020 with a time of 17:52.8, breaking the tape 7.5 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Hilltoppers to a third place finish as a team. A four-time Mississippi Valley Conference Runner of the Year, she is also a four-time First Team All-State selection and was the 2020 WCCCA Runner of the Year.

Malecek has volunteered locally at an animal hospital and for a veterinarian science academy. She has also donated her time as a youth running coach and a peer tutor. "Kora Malecek is a phenomenal runner," said Jon Heesch, head coach of Tomah High School. "She is one of the best high school distance runners that the state of Wisconsin has ever had."

Malecek has maintained a 3.99 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country and track on scholarship at the University of Illinois 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 Malecek joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Genevieve Nashold (2018-19, Madison West High School), Dana Feyen (2017-18, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau High School), and Meghan Scott (2016-17, Divine Savior Holy Angels High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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