

**ANCHORAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALASKA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (April 15, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Tristian Merchant of Anchorage Christian School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Merchant is the first Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Anchorage Christian 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 Merchant as Alaska's best high school boys cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in April, Merchant 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-9, 140-pound senior raced to his third consecutive Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a course record time of 14:51. Alaska's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Player of the Year, Merchant also won the Region 3 championship, the Grizzly Invitational and the ACS Invitational.

Merchant has volunteered locally on behalf of Anchorage Rescue Mission and youth running programs. "Tristian always gives his best, both in practice and in races," said Anchorage Christian coach Jake Moe. "He has a calm demeanor and a positive attitude, and he encourages others to believe in themselves and be consistent in their training."

Merchant has maintained a 3.69 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Northern Arizona 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.

Two-time winner Merchant joins recent Gatorade Alaska Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Daniel Bausch (2018-19, Chugiak High School), Jacob Moos (2017-18, Galena City Schools), and Gus Schumacher (2016-17, Service High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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