

**CASTEEL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA 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 Dayton Carlson of Casteel High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Carlson is the first Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Casteel 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 Carlson as Arizona'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, Carlson 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 6-foot-1, 135-pound senior raced to the Division 2 individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:06.1. Carlson also won the sectional championship, the Chandler Invitational, the Western Equinox Festival, the Titan Invitational, the Desert Daylight Invitational and the Chandler City championship.

Carlson has volunteered locally on behalf of Feed My Starving Children and youth track programs. "This season was very challenging, but Dayton is a hard worker, in all areas of life," said Casteel coach Whitney Lemieux. "He has put in a lot of quality miles, and pushed himself through countless training and physical therapy sessions to make huge gains."

Carlson has maintained a 3.71 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Arizona State 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.

Carlson joins recent Gatorade Arizona Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Leo Daschbach (2019-20 & 2018-19, Highland High School), Rylan Stubbs (2017-18, Campo Verde High School), and Manuel Olivo-Quinones (2016-17, Buena High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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