

**FAYETTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS 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 Jack Williams of Fayetteville High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Williams is the second Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Fayetteville 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 Williams as Arkansas'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, Williams 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-10, 130-pound senior won the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 15:38.44, breaking the tape 10.02 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Bulldogs to a third-place finish as a team. The All Arkansas Preps Overall Runner of the Year, Williams is a four-time First Team All-State selection. He placed second at the Arkansas vs. Oklahoma All-Star Meet and finished 67th at the Nike Cross Virtual Championships.

The treasurer of the Fayetteville High student council, Williams has volunteered locally with the Special Olympics and as part of community beautification projects. "This year, Jack just decided he was going to be in the mix in every race and be a force to contend with—and he did just that," said Michelle Fyfe, head coach of Fayetteville High. "He loves every aspect of racing. He is passionate about understanding a bad or a good race and using that reflection to be stronger in the next race."

Williams has maintained a 3.40 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Williams joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Lukas Pabst (2019-20, Bentonville High School) and Camren Fischer (2018-19, 2017-18 & 2016-17, Fayetteville High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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