

**MAUI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE HAWAII 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 Hunter Shields of Maui High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Shields is the first Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Maui 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 Shields as Hawaii'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, Shields 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 two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-10, 160-pound senior won the state meet as a junior and placed second as a sophomore in 2018 when he led the Sabers to a team state title. He was also a two-time Maui Interscholastic League All-Star. Hawaii did not organize a 2020 cross country season due to pandemic-related concerns.

Shields has volunteered locally at the Maui Humane Society, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Hunter entered the summer with hopes of a cross country season," said Jared Welch, head coach of Maui High. "He was putting in more mileage than he had prior to the 2019 season and was a leader for the young team. He got better each year that he ran, reaching the pinnacle of the sport in our state a year ago."

Shields has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Grand Canyon 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.

Three-time winner Shields joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Colby Otero (2017-18, Kalaheo High School), and Connor Lehl (2016-17, Punahou School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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