

**STILLWATER AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Ethan Vargas of Stillwater Area High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Vargas is the first Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Stillwater Area 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 Vargas as Minnesota'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, Vargas 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, 135-pound senior won the Twin Cities Running Club Showcase Large School race this past season with a time of 15:54.6, breaking the tape 2.52 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. Vargas also took first at the Section 4AA meet and the Suburban East Conference Championship meet. There was no state meet due to pandemic concerns. A three-time All-SEC selection, he finished 10th at the 2019 Class AA state meet.

A representative on the Stillwater High student council, Vargas has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through his school's National Honor Society and his church youth group. "Ethan was the perfect leader and athlete to carry us through a Covid-19 season," said Scott Christensen, head coach of Stillwater High. "He never once complained about our 2020 circumstances. He is a selfless, low-drama person who was perfect for this time in Stillwater running history."

Vargas has maintained a weighted 3.75 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Furman 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.

Vargas joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Nick Scheller (2019-20, Chanhassen High School), Acer Iverson (2018-19 & 2017-18, Roseville Area High School), and Alex Miley (2016-17, Maple Grove Senior High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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