

**ROCK BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Matthew Hauser of Rock Bridge High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Hauser is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Rock Bridge 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 Hauser as Missouri'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, Hauser 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-inch, 135-pound senior distance talent led the Bruins to the team title at the MSHSAA Class 5 State XC Championships this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 15:34.50—the fastest all-class clocking of the state postseason. A three-time All-State selection, Hauser recorded a personal-best 5K of 15:12.45 to win the 17th Annual Camdenton Laker XC Invitational en route to a 6-0 regular season meet record in head-to-head matchups. He also finished 41st at the national XC Town USA Meet of Champions.

An active member of his church community at The Crossing, Hauser has volunteered on behalf of its youth group, including completing mission work abroad constructing homes in low-income countries. "Matthew is a tremendous runner," said Joe Porter, head coach at St. Louis University High. "What I think made him elite was his ability to win races regardless of tactics. He could win a race off of a slow pace or he could push the pace from the gun. Either way, he would find a way to be at the front when it mattered. At the state meet, it became apparent early on that Matthew was able to dictate the type of race he wanted to run because it was clear he was the best runner in the field. His move with one kilometer to go was incredible to watch, and you knew he was going to continue to drop the rest of an elite field pretty quickly and hold on to victory."

Hauser has maintained a 3.80 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Kansas 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.

Hauser joins recent Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Wes Porter (2019-20, Rockhurst High School), Christian Baker (2018-19, Kirkwood High School), Victor Mugeche (2017-18, Blue Springs High School), and Austin Hindman (2016-17, Lafayette High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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