

**MUSTANG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OKLAHOMA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (April 15, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Gabe Simonsen of Mustang High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Simonsen is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Mustang 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 Simonsen as Oklahoma'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, Simonsen 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 returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-6, 125-pound senior won the Class 6A state meet for a second-straight year this past season with a time of 15:31.79, breaking the tape 17.79 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Broncos to a first-place finish as a team. A three-time Daily Oklahoman All-City selection, Simonsen also won the Arkansas vs. Oklahoma All-Star Meet by more than 10 seconds.

Simonsen has volunteered locally at an orphanage, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Gabe had another strong season and was dominant in the 'championship season,'" said Scott Downard, head coach of Westmoore High School. "He's definitely been the athlete to beat on the Oklahoma cross country scene."

Simonsen has maintained a weighted 4.11 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Oklahoma 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.

Two-time winner Simonsen joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Sam Bass (2018-19, Casady School), Luke Murphy (2017-18, Lincoln Christian High School), and Matt Young (2016-17, Jenks High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Simonsen has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Simonsen 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](http://www.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###