

**MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MARYLAND GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 10, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Juliette Whittaker of Mount de Sales Academy as its 2020-21 Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Whittaker is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Mount de Sales Academy.

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 Whittaker as Maryland's best high school girls cross country player. Whittaker 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 Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-8 junior was undefeated during the fall season running as an individual. Mount de Sales did not stage a formal cross country season due to the pandemic. Whittaker won the Virginia Elite Invitational and she set a state record for the 5,000-meter run on a track with her time of 16:58.32 at the Bullseye Summer Track Series in October.

The president of the Mount de Sales junior class, Whittaker has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and as a peer tutor. "This was a challenging season due to the pandemic, but Juliette was patient throughout and made the most of Maryland's limited opportunities," said Steve Weber, head coach of Mount de Sales Academy. "She trained consistently, mostly on her own, with remarkable patience given the situation. She displayed such maturity throughout—she will not be swayed by adversity."

Whittaker has maintained a weighted 4.29 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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 work 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 Whittaker joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Oakley Olson (2018-19, Huntingtown High School), Abbey Green (2017-18, Walter Johnson High School), and Maria Coffin (2016-17, Annapolis High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Whittaker has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Whittaker 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.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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