

**SEVERNA PARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MARYLAND BOYS 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 Jake Gelfand of Severna Park High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Maryland Boys Cross Country Player of the Year. Gelfand is the second Gatorade Maryland Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Severna Park 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 Gelfand as Maryland's best high school boys cross country player. Gelfand 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-8, 125-pound senior won all three races he competed in during the abbreviated spring season for the Falcons. Running as an individual last fall, Gelfand won the Virginia Elite Invitational and was undefeated against in-state competition. He also took 30th at the national XC Town USA Meet of Champions.

Gelfand has volunteered locally with RISE for Autism, a non-profit dedicated to improving awareness, acceptance and understanding of Autism. He has also donated his time as a youth track coach and as a mentor to at-risk children. "Jake's commitment and work ethic are outstanding," said Josh Carroll, head coach of South River High. "He is tough and he seeks to impose his will during a race. Jake likes to run up front and challenge other athletes to keep up with him for three miles."

Gelfand has maintained a weighted 4.16 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to attend Cornell University, where he will run for the cross country and track teams, beginning 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.

Gelfand joins recent Gatorade Maryland Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Owen Johnson (2019-20, Calvert Hall College High School), Obsaa Feda (2018-19, Northwood High School), and Dalton Hengst (2017-18 & 2016-17, McDonogh School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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