

**VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 24, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Crawford West** of **Vestavia Hills High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. West is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Vestavia Hills 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 West as Alabama's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, West 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-2 senior raced to the Class 7A individual state championship this past year with a time of 17:06.33, leading the Rebels to second place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year in girls cross country, West also won the Jesse Owens Classic Gold Race and the Chickasaw Trails Invitational Large School title. She placed sixth at the Eastbay South Regional Championships.

A devoted member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, West has volunteered locally as a mentor for elementary school students and has raised funds to benefit the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. "Crawford West is the textbook definition of grit," said Vestavia Hills High School assistant coach Katherine Terino. "Her sheer will to work and go the extra mile was a driving force not only in her individual success, but in the success of the team."

West has maintained a 4.09 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Alabama 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner West joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Lainey Phelps (2019-20, Homewood High School), Presley Miles (2018-19, Saint James School), and Amaris Tyynismaa (2017-18, Montgomery Catholic Preparatory School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, West has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. West is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.