

**MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 **Ciara O'Shea** of **Madison Central High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. O'Shea is the first Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Madison Central 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 O'Shea as Kentucky'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, O'Shea 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 two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-2 junior won the Class AAA state meet for the fourth-straight year this past season with a time of 18:25.42, breaking the tape 58.49 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Indians to a 10th-place finish as a team. O'Shea took second at the Eastbay South Regional Championships and 26th at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships. She has been the top Kentucky finisher in 35 of the 36 races she's entered in her prep cross country career.

O'Shea has volunteered locally as part of food drives for the needy and at a retirement community. She has also donated her time as a youth tutor and on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Ciara has been a dominating runner in Kentucky," said Barry Haworth, head coach of Assumption High School. "It's actually hard to run quality times when you're so far out ahead of everyone else, and I was quite impressed with her ability to drop great marks while often literally running alone."

O'Shea has maintained a weighted 4.22 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Three-time winner O'Shea joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Karlee Hoffman (2018-19, Daviess County High School), and Kaitlyn Lacy (2017-18, Louisville Male High 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, O'Shea 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. O'Shea 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.