

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

**CHICAGO** (January 24, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Juliette Whittaker** of **Mount de Sales Academy** is the **2021-22 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. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, 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 two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-8 senior won the Independent Athletic Association of Maryland state meet with a time of 18:21.01, breaking the tape 1:49.07 ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Sailors to a fourth-place finish as a team. Also the state's returning Gatorade Girls Track & Field Player of the Year, Whittaker took third at the Eastbay Northeast Regional Championships and finished 28th at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships.

The three-year president of her class at Mount de Sales, Whittaker has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and as a peer tutor. "Juliette is the most phenomenal runner I've seen compete in many, many years," said Phil Turner, head coach of the McDonogh School. "Not only is she incredibly talented and determined, but she is a true class act."

Whittaker has maintained a weighted 4.40 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Stanford 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Three-time winner Whittaker joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Oakley Olson (2018-19, Huntingtown High School) and Abbey Green (2017-18, Walter Johnson 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, Whittaker 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. Whittaker 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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