

**WEST OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Arienne Olson** of **West Ottawa High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Olson is the first Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from West Ottawa 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 Olson as Michigan'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, Olson 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-3 junior crossed the line in 13th at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships this past season with a time of 17:43.4, earning All-American status in the process. Olson captured the Portage Invitational, the MSU Spartan Invitation and the Region championships, while finishing third at the Division 1 state championship meet. She took fourth at the Eastbay Midwest Regional Championships.

Also a standout Nordic skier, Olson has volunteered locally on behalf of the Mackinac Island Honor Scouts and youth running camps. "Arienne is not only one of the most gifted athletes in Michigan, she is also one of the smartest and hardest-working," said West Ottawa High School coach Kyle Barnes. "She takes it upon herself to do things that very few athletes would even think about, let alone actually do."

Olson has maintained a 4.0 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.

Olson joins recent Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Abby VanderKooi (2020-21 & 2018-19, Western Michigan Christian High School), Zofia Dudek (2019-20, Pioneer High School), and Olivia Theis (2017-18, Lansing Catholic 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, Olson 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. Olson 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.