

**CIMARRON-MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEVADA 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 **Olivia Garcia** of **Cimarron-Memorial High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Garcia is the first Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Cimarron-Memorial 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 Garcia as Nevada'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, Garcia 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-6 senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 20:31.5. Garcia also won the Falcon Invitational, the SNTCCCA Invitational and the Southern Nevada State Qualifier, while also finishing second at the Larry Burgess-Las Vegas Invitational.

Also a standout soccer player and a talented musician, Garcia has volunteered locally on behalf of a Vacation Bible School and an assisted living community. "Olivia achieved a personal record almost every time she crossed a finish line this year," said Cimarron-Memorial High School coach Laurelyn Briggs. "She's a dream athlete to coach. She became the captain not only for the girls' team but also the boys' team in 2021, and she was a role model both on and off the cross country course."

Garcia has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Florida State 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.

Garcia joins recent Gatorade Nevada Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Kendra Lusk (2020-21, Spring Creek High School), Penelope Smerdon (2019-20, Reno High School), Carissa Buchholz (2018-19, South Lake Tahoe High School) and Alexis Melendrez (2017-18, Spanish Springs 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, Garcia 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. Garcia 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.

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