

**FAYETTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 31, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Hudson Betts** of **Fayetteville High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Betts is the third Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Fayetteville 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 Betts as Arkansas' best high school boys cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, Betts 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 6-foot, 145-pound junior won the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 15:50.28, breaking the tape 9.13 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Bulldogs to a second-place finish as a team. Unbeaten against in-state competition, Betts earned Third Team All-South Region honors by finishing 36th at the Eastbay South Regional Championships and he ran a state-best time of 15:23 at the national Garmin RunningLane Cross Country Championships Silver race.

Betts has volunteered locally as a member of the Fayetteville High Dawg Crew, a student-leadership club that helps with freshman orientation. He has also donated his time to the Special Olympics and he's active member of his church community. "Hudson ran at a very high level this season," said Mike Power, head coach of Bentonville High School. "He is a dedicated athlete who not only performs for his individual accolades, but is a team player as well."

Betts has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

Betts joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Jack Williams (2020-21, Fayetteville High School), Lukas Pabst (2019-20, Bentonville High School), Camren Fischer (2018-19 & 2017-18, Fayetteville 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, Betts 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. Betts 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.