

**NIWOT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE COLORADO 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 **Zane Bergen** of **Niwot High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bergen is the first Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Niwot 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 Bergen as Colorado's 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, Bergen 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, 135-pound senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:17.7, leading the Cougars to second place as a team. Bergen also placed fourth in both national championship races—clocking a 14:09.91 at the Garmin RunningLane Cross Country Championships and crossing the line in 15:20.2 at the Eastbay Cross Country Championships (formerly Foot Locker). He earned wins at the Desert Twilight Festival, the St. Vrain Invitational and the Region 3 Championships and also took third at the Eastbay Midwest Regional Championships.

Bergen has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs in addition to Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., which assists disabled veterans. "Zane can push his body beyond the limits of 99 percent of all humans," said Niwot High School coach Kelly Christensen. "He's also the best leader that I've ever coached. He's selfless, dedicated, passionate and will do whatever it takes to help his team succeed."

Bergen has maintained a weighted 4.18 GPA in the classroom. He 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.

Bergen joins recent Gatorade Colorado Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Parker Wolfe (2020-21, Cherry Creek High School) and Cole Sprout (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18, Valor Christian 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, Bergen 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. Bergen 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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