

**DENMARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 31, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ethan Ashley** of **Denmark High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Ashley is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Denmark 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 Ashley as Georgia'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, Ashley 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, 155-pound senior distance talent led the Danes to third place as a team at the GHSA 7A State Cross Country Championships this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 15:45.78. Ashley also won the Eastbay South Regional in a personal-best 15:00.31 and finished 23<sup>rd</sup> at national Eastbay Cross Country Championships in 15:52.30, earning Second Team All-American honors in the process. He also won the Championship race at the prestigious Coach Wood Invitational (15:01.39). The state's top finisher at both Eastbay South and Eastbay nationals, Ashley was the Atlanta Track Club All-Metro Boys Runner of the Year. He concluded his prep career as a 2021 MileSplit50 Honorable Mention selection and ranked No. 57 in the national Dyestat Top 100.

A leader in his local Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter and vice president of his school's National Honor Society program, Ashley is also a member of the Future Business Leaders of America. He has served for three years as a Dane Director, a community-service team of school leaders selected by teachers, as well as on the Superintendent's District Advisory Board. He has volunteered locally on behalf of a local food pantry, served two years in the children's ministry of his church community and founded a middle school cross country team to which he donated his time as coach. "Ethan Ashley had one of the more dominant seasons in Georgia cross country history," said Jack Coleman, head coach at Marietta High School. "Regardless of the meet or course, Ethan showed he was the fittest, strongest and fastest runner in the state. Leading his team to a podium finish in Georgia's most competitive classification proved he is not only a great runner, but also an inspirational team leader."

Ashley has maintained a 4.19 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has been admitted to the United States Air Force Academy, where he will compete in track and cross country beginning 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.

Ashley joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Kamari Miller (2020-21, Marietta High School), Graham Blanks (2019-20, Athens Academy), Kyle Harkabus (2018-19, East Coweta High School), and Sam Bowers (2017-18, Milton 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, Ashley 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. Ashley 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).

###