

**NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 **Nick Falk** of **New Trier High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Falk is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from New Trier 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 Falk as Illinois' 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, Falk 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-11, 140-pound senior raced to 19th at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships this past season with a time of 15:39.9. Falk took second at the Class 3A state championships and finished fourth at the Eastbay Midwest Regional Championships. He broke the tape at the Peoria Invitational, the Regional championships and the Central Suburban League championships.

Falk has volunteered locally on behalf of the Run BeCAUSE charity race. "Coming out of 18 months of COVID protocols, in addition to a setback from a significant breathing issue, Nick displayed patience and perseverance to claw himself back into shape over the late summer and fall," said New Trier coach Matt Sloan. "I knew, without question, that during the business end of the season, Nick would be ready to meet the challenge presented by the other top runners in the state."

Falk has maintained a weighted 4.40 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Duke 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.

Falk joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Drew Rogers (2020-21, Herscher High School), Josh Methner (2019-20 & 2018-19, John Hersey High School), and Danny Kilrea (2017-18, Lyons Township 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, Falk 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. Falk 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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