

**JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE LOUISIANA 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 **Michael Vocke** of **Jesuit High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Louisiana Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Vocke is the first Gatorade Louisiana Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Jesuit 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 Vocke as Louisiana'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, Vocke 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-2, 170-pound sophomore distance talent broke the tape with a time of 15:26.30 in the 3-mile LHSAA 5A State Championship this past season, leading the Blue Jays to the state team title. Vocke also won the 9-5A District Championship meet with a personal-best time of 15:06.44—the state's No. 2 boys clocking in 2021. A 2021 LSWA All-State selection, he was unbeaten at the 3-mile distance last fall and clocked a personal-best 5K time of 15:22.72 as the top Louisiana finisher (13th overall) in the Championship race at the Southern Showcase, where he lifted Jesuit to the meet's team title.

An altar server at St. Catherine of Siena since 2016, Vocke has also donated his time by assisting the needy in association with service initiatives at his school. "Michael Vocke, along with his Jesuit teammates, is rewriting what it means to be a competitive distance runner in Louisiana," said Justin Cochran, head coach at Ruston High School. "Only a sophomore, he has already won or shared in two state outdoor titles and has added one in cross country. Everything I see and hear about Vocke leads me to believe he will challenge for many more in the next two-plus years. He is an example of what can happen when legit talent meets dedication and work ethic. The bar for Louisiana distance running success has been reset, and the guy who's doing it is Michael Vocke."

Vocke has maintained a 3.86 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Vocke joins recent Gatorade Louisiana Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Dyllon Nimmers (2020-21, Ruston High School), Will Dart (2019-20, Loyola College Prep), Hunter Appleton (2018-19, Brother Martin High School), and Adam Wise (2017-18, Fontainebleau 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, Vocke 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. Vocke 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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