

**HAMPDEN ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE 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 **Abbott Valentine** of **Hampden Academy** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Valentine is the second Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Hampden Academy.

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 Valentine as Maine'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, Valentine 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, 130-pound senior won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 15:34.44, breaking the tape 1.35 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Broncos to the team title. Valentine finished second against a national field at the Garmin RunningLane Cross Country Championships Silver race. He also took fourth at the Nike Cross Northeast Regional Championships.

An Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America, Valentine fundraised and helped organize a build-a-canoe-rack initiative for the Field's Pond Audubon Center in Holden as his Scout project. He has volunteered locally with the Special Olympics and as a youth track coach in addition to donating his time on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Abbott is a very focused, determined athlete," said Danielle Johnson, head coach of Hampden Academy. "He has the most grit of any runner I have coached and this season was a testament to his mental fortitude and toughness."

Valentine has maintained an A average in the classroom and received a perfect score of 36 on his ACT test. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Valentine joins recent Gatorade Maine Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Ben Greene (2020-21, Falmouth High School), Lisandro Berry-Gaviria (2019-20 & 2018-19, Mount Ararat High School), and Luke Laverdiere (2017-18, Yarmouth 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, Valentine 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. Valentine 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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