

**FRAMINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 **Sam Burgess** of **Framingham High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Burgess is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Framingham 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 Burgess as Massachusetts' 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, Burgess 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-10, 160-pound junior won the Division 1 state meet this past season with a time of 15:07.49, breaking the tape 7.39 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. Undefeated against in-state competition, Burgess finished ninth at the Eastbay Northeast Regional Championships and was the only state runner to qualify for the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships where he finished 29th.

A member of the Framingham High student government, Burgess has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service projects through his school's athletic department. "Sam had a terrific season to be sure," said Chris Van Cott, head coach of Needham High School. "Like all of us in the past two years, he's has been faced with a lot of uncertainty and yet through it all, he's clearly kept his focus and determination."

Burgess has maintained a weighted 4.20 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior 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.

Burgess joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Loeden Rodrigues (2020-21, Marblehead High School), Mike Griffin (2019-20, King Philip Regional High School), Ryan Oosting (2018-19, Arlington High School), and Tristan Shelgren (2017-18, St. John's Preparatory 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, Burgess 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. Burgess 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).

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