

**SAINT STANISLAUS COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Keegan Leverett** of **Saint Stanislaus College** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Leverett is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Saint Stanislaus College.

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 Leverett as Mississippi'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, Leverett 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, 140-pound senior distance talent led the Rock-A-Chaws to second place as a team at the MHSAA Class 3A State XC Championships this past season, breaking the tape to win the individual title with a time of 15:45.20—the fastest all-class clocking of the state meet. Leverett also won the Mississippi XC All-State Meet of Champions with a time of 15:39.39 and the Watson High School Meet in a personal-best 15:37.73. A four-time MHSAA All-State selection and three-time state champion, he clocked the state's fastest boys prep 5K time in 2021, recorded six times below 16 minutes and was the top Mississippi finisher at the national RunningLane XC Championships.

Inducted into the Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society, Leverett is a member of both the Hancock Youth Leadership Academy and Hancock Youth for Positive Efforts. Also a student ambassador at his school, he participates in the St. Stanislaus choir in addition to having volunteered locally on behalf of community service initiatives associated with the National Honor Society. "Leverett is a real competitor," said Jason Law, head coach at East Central High School. "He continued to get better every season, which is exactly what you want out of a runner. He finished first in almost every race he entered as a senior, capping it all off with a victory at states and the fastest all-class time of the day."

Leverett has maintained a 4.5 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma 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.

Leverett joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Christian Balcer (2020-21 & 2019-20, East Central High School), Brock Kelly (2018-19, Tupelo Christian Preparatory School), and Dylan Allen (2017-18, Mooreville 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, Leverett 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. Leverett 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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