

**ELKHORN SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 **Gabe Hinrichs** of **Elkhorn South High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Hinrichs is the first Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Elkhorn South 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 Hinrichs as Nebraska'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, Hinrichs 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, 145-pound senior won the Division A state meet this past season with a time of 15:18.2, breaking the tape 25.1 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Storm to a fifth-place finish as a team. Hinrichs won the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships and took sixth at the Eastbay Midwest Regional Championships. Also the state's 2020-21 Gatorade Boys Track & Field Player of the Year, he capped off his 2021 season with a 31st-place finish at the national Eastbay Cross Country Championships.

Hinrichs has volunteered locally as a peer tutor and on behalf of the Special Olympics. He has also donated his time as a youth sports volunteer through the Elkhorn Athletic Association. "Gabe had the most dominant Nebraska cross country season I have witnessed in a while," said Shannon Stenger, head coach of Papillion-La Vista South High School. "He had to come out meet after meet and find a way to push himself, and he did exactly that."

Hinrichs has maintained a weighted 3.86 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Notre Dame 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.

Hinrichs joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Liem Chot (2020-21 & 2019-20, North Star High School), Ben Arens (2018-19, Ainsworth High School), and Jake Ralston (2017-18, Papillion-La Vista South 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, Hinrichs 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. Hinrichs 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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