

**MOUNT TABOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Will Soule** of **Mount Tabor High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Soule is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Mount Tabor 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 Soule as North Carolina'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, Soule 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, 145-pound senior distance talent broke the tape at the NCHSAA 4A State Championships to win the individual title with a time of 15:31.62—the fastest all-class clocking of the public school state postseason—leading the Spartans to a first-place finish as a team. Soule also finished fourth at the Great American XC Festival Race of Champions, clocking a personal-best time of 15:14.90. A HighSchoolOT.com First Team All-State and NCMileSplit First Team All-State selection, he finished fifth at the adidas XC Challenge. With Soule anchoring the Spartans' efforts, Mount Tabor High School won the team title at both GAXC and adidas XC.

A member of the National Honor Society and the Mu Alpha Theta national mathematics honor society, Soule has volunteered locally on behalf of Ronald McDonald House Charities and for the state Division of Social Services foster child program. A former student council representative at Mount Tabor High School and a participant in Young Life Christian ministry, he has also donated his time on behalf of the Special Olympics. "I see Soule's performance at the state meet as just a little ahead of the other contenders in a close race for Gatorade honors in North Carolina," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat. "His PR is better than any of his serious challengers and he led Mount Tabor High School to team titles at states, the adidas Challenge and Great American."

Soule has maintained a 4.54 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of North Carolina 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.

Soule joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Murphy Smith (2020-21, Ardrey Kell High School), Ian Harrison (2019-20, Panther Creek High School), Anton Idhammar (2018-19, Cary High School), and John Tatter (2017-18, R.J. Reynolds 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, Soule 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. Soule 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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