

**SHEYENNE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 **Aiden Johnson** of **Sheyenne High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Johnson is the first Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Sheyenne 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 Johnson as North Dakota'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, Johnson 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-9, 140-pound sophomore raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:34.3. Johnson also won the Anderson/Stavn Invitational, the Andrew Nelson Metro Classic, the West Fargo Ian Alves Invitational and the Grand Forks Invitational. He took second at the Eastern Dakota Conference Championships and crossed the line in 30th at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships.

A devoted member of his church community, Johnson has fundraised to benefit Down Home, which assists homeless families, and he has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs. "Aiden's commitment and consistency are second to none," said Sheyenne High School coach Troy Thorson. "He leads by example and continues to set the bar very high. With him only being a sophomore, we look for really big things from him in the next few years."

Johnson has maintained a 3.70 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Sean Korsmo (2020-21, Bismarck High School), Brady Yoder (2019-20 & 2018-19, Dickinson High School), and Evan Saylor (2017-18, Century 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, Johnson 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. Johnson 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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