

**LITTLE MIAMI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OHIO 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 **William Zegarski** of **Little Miami High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Zegarski is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Little Miami 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 Zegarski as Ohio'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, Zegarski 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 won the Division 1 state meet this past season with a course-record time of 14:39.9, breaking the tape 18.2 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. After finishing second in his first race of the season, Zegarski won 11 consecutive events, including the Mideast Cross Country Championships. He finished 2021 with a personal-best time of 14:35.31 to take 18th at the national Garmin RunningLane Cross Country Championships.

A member of his school's Student Athlete Leadership Team, Zegarski has volunteered locally with the Hope Squad, a peer-led anti-suicide intervention program for students. He has also donated his time as a peer tutor in multiple school subjects. "William Zegarski was great this season," said Andy Wietmarschen, head coach of St. Xavier High School. "What was so impressive was the way he beat people. The relative ease with which he won is not something that's typical in a state with the talent-level of Ohio. He defeated some very good runners by wide margins."

Zegarski has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run cross country on scholarship at Butler University 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.

Zegarski joins recent Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Nathan Moore (2020-21, Lake High School), Caleb Brown (2019-20, Shelby High School), Conant Smith (2018-19, Middletown High School), and Dustin Horter (2017-18, Lakota East 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, Zegarski 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. Zegarski 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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