

**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Josh Edwards** of **University High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Edwards is the third Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from University 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 Edwards as West Virginia'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, Edwards 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 state's two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year in boys cross country, the 5-foot-7, 125-pound senior won his third-straight Class AAA state meet this past season with a time of 15:51.68, breaking the tape 28.56 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Hawks to the team title. Also the state's 2020-21 Gatorade Boys Track & Field Player of the Year, Edwards won all five races he entered this season and ran a season-best 15:04.7 at the Harry Groves Spiked Shoe Invitational in Pennsylvania. He concluded the 2021 campaign ranked No. 19 in the country in the MileSplit50.

Edwards has volunteered locally with the Special Olympics and as a youth running coach. "Josh pushes himself very hard in his own training," said Ed Frohnepfel, head coach of University High School. "His work ethic has been rewarded as he has set records in the state of West Virginia that will not be equaled for quite some time."

Edwards has maintained a weighted 4.02 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Three-time winner Edwards joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Aaron Withrow (2018-19, Winfield High School) and Chris Barbera (2017-18, Woodrow Wilson 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, Edwards 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. Edwards 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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