

**JACKSON HOLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WYOMING 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 **Mason Wheeler** of **Jackson Hole High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Wheeler is the second Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Jackson Hole 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 Wheeler as Wyoming'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, Wheeler 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-10, 143-pound senior won the Class 4A state meet this past season with a time of 16:10.45, breaking the tape 9.76 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Broncos to a second-place finish as a team. Wheeler won three meets in 2021, including the Chief Nation Invitational and the Lockhart Ranch Invitational. He finished 12th at the Nike Cross Northwest Regional Championships.

Wheeler has volunteered locally with Habitat for Humanity and as part of the trail maintenance crew at Bridger Teton National Forest. He has also donated his time as a Nordic ski race course marshall and official timer. "Mason was a tremendous competitor and he consistently raced his best on the days when it counted the most," said Art Baures, head coach of Sheridan High School. "He is a tough-minded runner and it is apparent that he relishes race days when the stakes are highest."

Wheeler has maintained a weighted 3.83 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Wheeler joins recent Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Peter Visser (2020-21, 2019-20, & 2018-19, Star Valley High School), and Albert Steiner (2017-18, Laramie 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, Wheeler 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. Wheeler 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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