

**MILILANI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE HAWAII GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Zola O'Donnell** of **Mililani High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. O'Donnell is the second Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Mililani 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 O'Donnell as Hawaii's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in January, O'Donnell joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Natalie Cook (2021-22, Flower Mound High School, Flower Mound, Texas), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

The 5-foot-3 senior raced to the Division 1 individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:07.92, leading the Trojans to fourth place as a team. O'Donnell also won the Kamehameha Invitational and Mililani Invitational. In addition, she captured the title at the Oahu Interscholastic Association Western Division Championships.

Also a competitor on the Mililani High School swim team, O'Donnell serves as treasurer of the school's Hispanic Honor Society and is a member of the Red Cross Club in addition to being a certified lifeguard. She has donated her time at Mililani High School's craft fairs as well. "Zola O'Donnell demonstrated significant improvement from her junior season, capping an unbeaten fall by elevating from eighth place at last year's state final to win her first title," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "Hers was the first individual state championship for Mililani since 2007."

O'Donnell has maintained a 4.29 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Hawaii at Manoa 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.

O'Donnell joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Kaylee Volner (2021-22, Seabury Hall), Emily Naylor (2020-21 & 2019-20, Kalaheo High School), and Chloe Gangnath (2018-19, Seabury Hall), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.