

**GALLATIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 23, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Claire Rutherford** of **Gallatin High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Rutherford is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Gallatin 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 Rutherford as Montana'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, Rutherford 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-6 sophomore raced to the Class AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:31.04, leading the Raptors to third place as a team. Rutherford also won the Bozeman Invitational, Butte High Invitational and Cottonwood Invitational, in addition to taking third at the Billings Invitational and placing sixth at the Mountain West Classic. She finished 10th at the Nike Northwest Regional Championships in Idaho.

Rutherford is a member of Future Health Professionals club, a student-led organization with the mission to promote career opportunities in the health industry and enhance the delivery of quality health care. "Claire Rutherford benefited from several early season tests that provided valuable experience during the second half of the season, then demonstrated her growth by elevating from a 38th-place finish last year at the state final to capture the Class AA title," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "She used that momentum to finish in the top 10 at the Nike Northwest Regional, another great building block for her future success."

Rutherford has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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.

Rutherford joins recent Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Kensey May (2021-22 & 2020-21, Hellgate High School), Kylie Hartnett (2019-20, Helena High School), and Tiahna Vladic (2018-19, Billings Senior High School), 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](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).