

**CUTHBERTSON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Stella Kermes** of **Cuthbertson High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Kermes is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Cuthbertson 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 Kermes as North Carolina'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, Kermes 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-2 junior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:40.9, leading the Cavaliers to their fifth consecutive state title as a team. Kermes also won the Southern California Conference Championships, the Union County Championships and the Friday Night Lights Festival in addition to finishing second at the Nike Southeast Regional. She added a sixth-place finish in the sweepstakes race at the Woodbridge Classic in California, and took 31st at Nike Cross Nationals.

Kermes has volunteered locally on behalf of the South Charlotte Dog Rescue and HOPE Food Assistance for the Elderly of Union County. She has also served as an elementary school tutor for Union County Public Schools and as a Union County Elementary Schools Field Day volunteer, in addition to coaching in the Cuthbertson Middle School Cross Country program. "Stella Kermes not only winning the Class 4A state title, but also leading Cuthbertson to its best season in program history, including an eighth-place team finish at Nike Cross Nationals, vaulted her into being state's best performer in 2022," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com "Her victory at the Friday Night Lights Festival, in addition to placing sixth in the deepest regular-season race in the country at the Woodbridge Cross Country Classic were performances that helped put her over the top, along with finishing second at the Nike Southeast Regional."

Kermes has maintained a 4.43 weighted GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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.

Kermes joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Sarah Mitchell (2021-22, Apex High School) and Carmen Alder (2020-21, 2019-20, & 2018-19, Pinecrest 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).

###