

**PACERS HOMESCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Allie Zealand** of **Pacers Homeschool High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Zealand is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Pacers Homeschool 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 Zealand as Virginia'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, Zealand 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 junior raced to a fourth-place individual finish at the Garmin RunningLane National Championships this past season with a time of 17:46.1, earning All-America honors in the process. Zealand also won the Greensboro Invitational and took third at both the North Carolina Runners Elite Invitational and the Champs Sports South Regional Championships. She took eighth at the Champs Sports National Championships, becoming one of three prep girls in the country to earn All-America honors at both national finals.

An accomplished player of the guitar, piano and ukulele, Zealand has donated her time as part of a service-mission trip with Grace Church ministry to Nogales, Mexico. She has also been an active member of her church youth group since sixth grade and has volunteered locally at the Kids Carnival and other church events. Zealand has worked with Onward Academy's Lending Library and has tutored her younger siblings in several subjects in addition to serving as an assistant coach for the school's middle school and elementary school cross country teams. "Allie Zealand was one of the most pleasant surprises in the entire country during the postseason, qualifying for a pair of national finals and making the most of her opportunities to earn All-America honors at both meets," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "Her success was capped by an exceptional, eighth-place effort at Balboa Park in San Diego at the Champs Sports National Championships."

Zealand, who is homeschooled, has maintained a 4.00 GPA through her academic coursework with Onward Academy and Pacers Homeschool High School. 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.

Zealand joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Maddie Gardiner (2021-22, The Covenant School), Carly Wilkes (2020-21, Glenvar High School), Bethany Graham (2019-20, John Champe High School), and Mary Caroline Heinen (2018-19, Maggie L. Walker Governor's 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).

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