

**BENZIE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MICHIGAN BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 30, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Hunter Jones** of **Benzie Central High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Jones is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Benzie Central 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 Jones as Michigan'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, Jones joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Parker Wolfe (2020-21, Cherry Creek High School, Greenwood Village, Colo.), Nico Young (2019-20, Newbury Park High School, Newbury Park, Calif.), 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 6-foot, 155-pound senior was the nation's only prep runner to race to regional championship victories this past season, earning invites to both national championship meets in the process. Jones placed 10<sup>th</sup> at each national meet to earn All-America status at both. He also paced the Huskies to a seventh-place finish as a team with his win at the MHSAA LP Division 3 Final.

Jones has volunteered locally assisting the elderly in a number of community service capacities and is a member of Benzie Central High School's National Honor Society chapter, the Interact Club and the Science Olympiad. "Hunter Jones delivered a seminal moment in leading a swath of runners to smash the course record on Indiana's revered LaVern Gibson circuit en route to winning the highly competitive Nike Cross Midwest Regional," said PrepCalTrack editor Rich Gonzalez. "He later placed 10<sup>th</sup> at both national championship meets, ranking as one of only four runners in the country to earn Top 10 finishes in both."

Jones has maintained an unweighted 3.87 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Wake Forest University 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.

Jones joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Riley Hough (2021-22, Hartland High School), Nathan Walker (2020-21, Fremont High School), and Carter Solomon (2019-20 & 2018-19, Plymouth 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).