

**SOUTHERN BOONE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 30, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Connor Burns** of **Southern Boone High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Burns is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Southern Boone 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 Burns as Missouri'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, Burns 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-1, 140-pound senior raced to the Class 3 state championship this past season, winning by more than a minute to cap an unbeaten regular-season campaign. Burns was also the state's fastest performer at the Nike Cross Midwest Regionals, clocking a personal-best 14:27.3 to qualify for nationals, where he finished 32nd. He won seven of the nine meets he entered last fall, including the El Caliente race at the prestigious Chile Pepper Festival in Arkansas.

Burns has volunteered locally at a food bank and is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at his school. He also served as class president as a junior. "Not one to rest on his laurels as a sub-4 miler in track, Connor Burns took on all comers this past season with rousing success," said PrepCalTrack editor Rich Gonzalez. "A major meet win at the Richard Spring Invite was quickly followed by course record-breaking performances on major venues at Chile Pepper and LaVern Gibson in Indiana. He's truly a special talent who is just now coming into his own."

Burns has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Burns joins recent Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Andrew Hauser (2021-22, Rock Bridge High School), Matthew Hauser (2020-21, Rock Bridge High School), Wes Porter (2019-20, Rockhurst High School), and Christian Baker (2018-19, Kirkwood 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.