

**STEVENS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Simeon Birnbaum** of **Stevens High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Birnbaum is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Stevens 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 Birnbaum as South Dakota'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, Birnbaum 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, 145-pound senior raced to a 54-second margin of victory at the Class AA state meet this past season with a time of 15:16.2, pacing the Raiders to the team title and winning his second straight individual crown. Birnbaum finished unbeaten against in-state competition and earned All-America status at both national championship meets with a top-five and a top-10 finish. He was the state's fastest competitor at both regional qualifiers for nationals and his second-place showing at the Nike Heartland Regional Championship came by way of a personal-best clocking of 14:39.20.

A talented, first chair alto saxophone player at his school, Birnbaum has volunteered locally playing the instrument for the elderly in nursing homes and at his church. Last summer, he and several peers traveled to work on indigenous community farms in rural Puerto Rico. "Already the youngest American prep to break the 4-minute mile at age 16, Simeon Birnbaum attained new levels of success this fall in the sport of cross country," said PrepCalTrack editor Rich Gonzalez. "The University of Oregon signee was one of only two boys to place among the top six at each national meet, taking fourth at Champs Sports and sixth at the Nike final, displaying admirable humility and a positive spirit along the way."

Birnbaum has maintained a weighted 3.86 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.

Two-time winner Birnbaum joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Isaac Davelaar (2020-21, Sioux Falls Christian High School), Andrew Lauer (2019-20, Lincoln High School), and Aaron Ryan (2018-19, Aberdeen Central 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).

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