

**KNOXVILLE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 **Keegan Smith of Knoxville Catholic High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Knoxville Catholic 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 Smith as Tennessee'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, Smith 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 5-foot-8, 117-pound sophomore was the fastest Tennessean in the Saturday Light Fever Invitational Gold Varsity race this past season, clocking a personal-best time of 14:53.6 over 5K to take second. Smith was also the state's top performer at the Champs Sports Southeast Regionals, where he crossed the line 13th in 15:20.8. He finished fourth at the Class AA state meet, pacing the Fighting Irish to a fourth-place team finish.

Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of the Knoxville Bridge Ministry, serving meals monthly to hundreds of homeless. He has donated his time with the Columbus Home Children's Shelter, Samaritan Place and with the Ladies of Charity Knoxville. "A 19-time national champion at the age-group level, Keegan Smith has continued his excellence on the prep scene," said PrepCalTrack editor Rich Gonzalez. "Winning his second Gatorade Player of the Year award as a sophomore speaks volumes about his work ethic. His showing at Saturday Light Fever was a season highlight, but he then delivered an impressive top-15 finish at the Champs Sports Southeast Regionals."

Smith has maintained a 4.43 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Two-time winner Smith joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Aiden Britt (2020-21, Lebanon High School), Silas Winders (2019-20, Henry County High School), and Jake Renfree (2018-19, Knoxville Catholic 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.