

**SALINA CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE KANSAS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 22, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Katelyn Rupe** of **Salina Central High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Rupe is the first Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Salina Central High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation's top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Rupe as Kansas' best high school girls cross country player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Irene Riggs (2022-23, 2021-22 & 2020-21, Morgantown High School, Morgantown, W. Va.), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, 2018-19 & 2017-18, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

The 5-foot-4 junior won her second straight Class 5A state meet this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 17:36.20. Ranked No. 40 nationally in the 2023 MileSplit 50, Rupe captured silver at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional, making her the state's top prep girl in the race, and finished 28th at the NXN Final. The returning Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Player of the Year, she also clocked a personal-best 17:05.90 to win the 2023 Bob Schmoekel XC Invitational. She will enter her senior year boasting a 14-3 career race record with her only losses coming at regional or national meets.

Rupe was a nominated attendee at the Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership 4-day seminar last summer. An active member of her First Presbyterian Church youth group, she also participates in HOSA, a student-led organization that promotes career opportunities in the healthcare industry. She has also donated her time as a youth coach for the Salina Burn track club. "Katelyn Rupe didn't lose to any Kansas runner in 2023," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "In fact, she has never lost to an in-state competitor in her career in cross country. Until she does, I suspect she'll keep winning the Gatorade award."

Rupe has maintained a weighted 4.06 GPA in the classroom. 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.

Two-time winner Rupe joins recent Gatorade Kansas Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Anjali Hocker Singh (2021-22, Olathe North High School), Taylor Briggs (2020-21, Chapman High School) and Hope Jackson (2019-20, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

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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