

**HERNANDO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 22, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Kaitlyn Burge** of **Hernando High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Burge is the second Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Hernando 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 Burge as Mississippi’s 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-5 senior set six course records this past season and capped her prep career by breaking the tape at the MHSAA Class 7A state meet, clocking a time of 18:13.41 and leading the Tigers to second place as a team. Burge was the state’s top finisher at the Jesse Owens Classic Gold Race—10th overall—and crossed the line in a 5K personal-best 17:58.54. She posted an 8-2 meet record in 2023.

Burge has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church, the National Honor Society and Hernando High’s Rotary International Interact Club. “Kaitlyn Burge won the state’s highest classification by almost 25 seconds and seemed to rewrite course records everywhere she ran in 2023,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “She also ran the state’s fastest 5K among prep girls last fall.”

Burge has maintained a 4.59 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to run on scholarship at Mississippi State 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.

Burge joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Addison Rainey (2022-23, Ocean Springs High School) and Brooklyn Biancamano (2021-22, 2020-21, & 2019-20, Long Beach 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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