

**GALLATIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MONTANA 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 **Claire Rutherford** of **Gallatin High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Rutherford is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Gallatin 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 Rutherford as Montana’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-6 junior won a second straight Class AA individual title this past season with a time of 18:06.58, breaking the tape 7.3 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Raptors to a second-place finish as a team. Rutherford was the top Montana finisher at both the Nike Cross Northwest Regional Championships and the Foot Locker West Regional Championships. She is also the state’s returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Player of the Year.

Rutherford is a member of Future Health Professionals club, a student-led organization with a mission to promote career opportunities in the health industry and enhance the delivery of quality health care. “Claire had another tremendous season,” said Casey Jermyn, head coach of Bozeman High School. “She did battle a few injuries early on, but was able to put together a great season. She seemed to really run well when it mattered most.”

Rutherford has maintained a weighted 4.13 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 Rutherford joins recent Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Kensey May (2021-22 & 2020-21, Hellgate High School) and Kylie Hartnett (2019-20, Helena 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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