

**PACERS HOMESCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Allie Zealand** of **Pacers Homeschool High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Zealand is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Pacers Homeschool 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 Zealand as Virginia'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-4 senior earned silver at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season, capturing First Team All-America honors with a time of 17:04.5. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Zealand also finished 13th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final to garner Second Team All-America recognition. She qualified for Nike nationals by winning the NXR Southeast title, clocking a personal-best 16:34.30 to finish more than 25 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor.

Currently preparing to participate in a service-mission trip to Nogales, Mexico this summer, Zealand has volunteered locally on behalf of her church youth group and helps coach youth runners. "Allie Zealand closed out her prep cross country career in style by capturing All-America honors at the nation's two most prized meets following an unbeaten regular-season campaign," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "She concluded her prep career as a three-time qualifier for Foot Locker nationals."

Zealand, who is homeschooled through her coursework with Onward Christian Academy, has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to run on scholarship at Liberty 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.

Two-time winner Zealand joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Maddie Gardiner (2021-22, The Covenant School), Carly Wilkes (2020-21, Glenvar High School) and Bethany Graham (2019-20, John Champe 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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