

**LAKESIDE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 26, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Joseph Bariola** of **Lakeside High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bariola is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Lakeside 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 Bariola as Arkansas’ best high school boys 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 Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11 & 2009-10, Carl Sandburg High School, Ill.) and Edward Cheserek (2012-13, St. Benedict’s Preparatory School, N.J.).

The 6-foot-2, 145-pound senior broke the tape at the Nike Cross Southeast Regional Championships in a personal-best time of 14:52.9 this past season. A four-time All-State honoree, Bariola won Class 5A State Championship in a time of 15:22.06, leading the Rams to a third-place finish as a team. He also was the top Arkansas finisher in securing the bronze medal at the highly competitive Chile Pepper Festival.

Voted by his peers as the campus Student Section Spirit Leader for all sporting events, Bariola has volunteered locally on behalf of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association. “While Joseph Bariola proved himself as the top runner in the state, it was his unselfish act in pacing three teammates through the first two miles of the conference championship meet—burying himself into a 21-second deficit behind the race leader in the process—that led the team to its first conference crown in school history,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “He responded with a flourish over the final 1.1 miles of that race to also win the individual title by one second, then followed up with a regional championship.”

Bariola has maintained a 3.28 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Missouri 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.

Bariola joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Hudson Betts (2022-23 & 2021-22, Fayetteville High School), Jack Williams (2020-21, Fayetteville High School) and Lukas Pabst (2019-20, Bentonville 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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