

**KALANI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE HAWAII 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 **Yuta Cole** of **Kalani High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Cole is the first Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Kalani 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 Cole as Hawaii’s 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 5-foot-9, 135-pound senior won the state meet this past season with a time of 16:16.12, breaking the tape 15.3 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Falcons to an eighth-place finish as a team. Cole won six of the eight races he entered and was the top Hawaii finisher at the Nike Cross Northwest Regional Championships, crossing the line 54th in 15:57.4.

Cole has volunteered locally at the Kalani Health Fair and he has donated his time as a middle school running coach. “Yuta is a complete runner who can race in all different ways and handle different tactics,” said Jack Kuo, head coach of ‘Iolani School. “Yuta is a strong runner and had a great season.”

Cole has maintained a 3.89 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Cole joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Keane Palmer (2022-23, ‘Iolani High School), Kaimana Cantere (2021-22, Maui High School) and Hunter Shields (2020-21 & 2019-20, Maui 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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