

**HINSDALE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 **Aden Bandukwala** of **Hinsdale Central High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bandukwala is the second Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Hinsdale Central 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 Bandukwala as Illinois’ 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-11, 140-pound senior won the Class 3A State Championships with a personal-best time of 14:13.56 this past season. Bandukwala also raced to a 35th-place finish at the Nike Cross Nationals championship meet. He crossed the line in 5th place at the Nike Cross Midwest Regional Championship to qualify for nationals, earning First Team All-Region honors in the process.

A Life Scout in the Boys Scouts of America and a member of the National Honor Society, Bandukwala has volunteered locally on behalf of HCS Family Services and People’s Resource Center food pantries. “An off-the-charts performer in the classroom, Aden Bandukwala unleashed his best three performances of the season in his final three races,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “He concludes his prep cross country career as a two-time Class 3A state champion and two-time qualifier for nationals.”

Bandukwala has maintained a 5.48 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Duke 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.

Bandukwala joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Daniel Watcke (2022-23, Hinsdale Central High School), Nick Falk (2021-22, New Trier High School), Drew Rogers (2020-21, Herscher High School) and Josh Methner (2019-20, John Hersey 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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