

**FREELAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **TJ Hansen** of **Freeland High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Hansen is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Freeland 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 Hansen as Michigan’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-10, 125-pound junior finished 10th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, earning Second Team All-America honors. Hansen also won the MHSAA LP Division 2 State Finals, clocking an all-divisions best time of 14:52.80. Ranked No. 28 in the 2023 MileSplit 50, he was named First Team All-Region for his fourth-place finish at NXR Midwest and broke the tape at the Shepherd BLUEJAY Invite in 14:46.30 to set a new 5K personal-best.

Hansen has donated his time extensively on behalf of the school district’s middle school track program. He has also volunteered locally by mowing, edging, lining and painting Freeland’s home cross country facility. “TJ Hansen finished in the top 10 of the toughest national race field in the country last fall after winning the state title in decisive fashion a month earlier,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “He toed the line 16 times in 2023 and won 13. Hard to argue with that kind of success.”

Hansen has maintained a 3.6 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

Hansen joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Hunter Jones (2022-23, Benzie Central High School), Riley Hough (2021-22, Hartland High School), Nathan Walker (2020-21, Fremont High School) and Carter Solomon (2019-20, Plymouth 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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