

**PEARL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Jaquavion Bryant** of **Pearl High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bryant is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Pearl 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 Bryant as Mississippi’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 6-foot, 149-pound junior won the MHSAA Class 7A state meet this past season, breaking the tape in 15:41.92 and leading the Pirates to a second straight state title as a team. Bryant also clocked the state’s fastest 5K by a prep boy last fall at the Jesse Owens Classic Gold Race, crossing the line as Mississippi’s competitor at the event with a personal-best 15:24.44. He won the Class 6A individual title as a sophomore.

Bryant has volunteered locally at junior high track meets and by helping elderly neighbors in his community with yard work. “Jaquavion Bryant kicked his season into high gear in October and never looked back,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “He won his state title in a meet record and turned in an impressive run at the Jesse Owens Classic.”

Bryant has maintained a B average in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school next 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.

Bryant joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Sidney Stegall (2022-23, Heritage Academy), Keegan Leverett (2021-22, Saint Stanislaus College), and Christian Balcer (2020-21 & 2019-20, East Central 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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