

**UNION CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 26, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Jimmy Wischusen** of **Union Catholic High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Wischusen is the first Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Union Catholic 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 Wischusen as New Jersey’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-1, 150-pound senior delivered a signature performance by racing to seventh place at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, clocking a time of 15:25.5 to earn First Team All-America accolades. Wischusen finished among the top two in every race he completed in 2023, including winning the Union County Championships in a personal-best time 15:12.0. He also crossed the line second at the Non-Public A Group meet, leading the Vikings to second place as a team.

Wischusen has volunteered locally at Theater To All, which conducts summertime shows and A Christmas Carol each year to raise funds for a chosen charity. He has also served as a volunteer youth coach for the Speed Skills Track Club. “Despite repeated adversity from injury, Jimmy Wischusen’s relentless perseverance culminated his prep cross country career in storybook fashion,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Even when a hamstring issue derailed his final pair of in-state races, his resilience on the national stage is something very few saw coming.”

Wischusen has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Virginia 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.

Wischusen joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Micah Lawson (2022-23, Rahway High School), Marco Langon (2021-22, Bridgewater-Raritan High School), Vidhur Polam (2020-21, South Brunswick High School) and Liam Murphy (2019-20, Allentown 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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