

**RIO RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Charlie Vause** of **Rio Rancho High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Vause is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Rio Rancho 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 Vause as New Mexico'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, 145-pound junior broke the tape at the Class 5A State Championships this past season in a personal-best, course-record time of 15:17.16, leading the Rams to the team title. Vause also finished 14<sup>th</sup> at the Nike Cross Southwest Regional Championships to earn Second Team All-Region honors. He won nine of 10 races this past season.

A member of his school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, Vause has volunteered locally on behalf of service projects such as "The Big Event," the largest school-run service activity in the state. He has also donated his time by picking apples for food drives in the greater Corrales area. An active member in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he has also served his community by preparing meals for those in need and by contributing manual labor to various landscape-beautification initiatives. "After relocating from Ohio, Charlie Vause made it tough on New Mexico's best to match his pace," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Winning all but two races while also breaking the state class meet course record this past season, he's poised to become a national elite performer."

Vause has maintained a 4.00 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.

Vause joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Steven West (2022-23, Sandia High School), Rendon Kuykendall (2021-22 & 2020-21, Hope Christian High School) and Galvin Curley (2019-20, Navajo Pine 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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