

**ATHENS DRIVE MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Noah Valyo** of **Athens Drive Magnet High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Valyo is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Athens Drive Magnet 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 Valyo as North Carolina’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-9, 135-pound senior broke the tape at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional Championships this past season, clocking a personal-best time of 14:40.80 to earn First Team All-Region honors. Ranked No. 28 in the 2023 Dyestat 100, Valyo was unbeaten by an in-state runner last fall. His victories at the Class 4A state meet—where he ran the fastest all-class time of the day—and the Great American XC Festival were also marquee wins.

Valyo recently completed a sports management internship and has donated his time to the Jaguars athletic department by creating media, performing social-networking and providing logistical support. “Valyo qualified for Nike nationals in spectacular fashion and was the fastest North Carolina competitor at every meet he entered last fall,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “His time at NXN regionals was the fastest 5K in the state last fall.”

Valyo has maintained a 4.17 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at North Carolina State 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.

Valyo joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Rocky Hansen (2022-23, Christ School), Will Soule (2021-22, Mount Tabor High School), Murphy Smith (2020-21, Ardrey Kell High School) and Ian Harrison (2019-20, Panther Creek 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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