

**FAIRFIELD UNION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 **Andrew Walton** of **Fairfield Union High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Walton is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Fairfield Union 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 Walton as Ohio'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-11, 140-pound junior broke the tape at the Division 2 State Championships in a course-record time of 15:00.2 this past season, leading the Falcons to a third-place finish as a team. Walton also earned All-Region status at both the Nike Cross Midwest Regional Championships (8th-place finish) and the Foot Locker Midwest Regional Championships, where he crossed the line in 20th. His personal-best time came at the Lancaster Invitational when he took third and clocked a 14:57.7.

Active in organizing events for Special Olympics events on campus, Walton has volunteered locally in association with Warriorthon, an on-campus initiative that raises funds to combat childhood cancer. He also has donated his time preparing and packing items for WARM, a community food ministry that helps feed the less fortunate. "Andrew Walton's durability throughout the season was impressive," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Compiling 11 race victories in a grueling, 14-race schedule, he mustered the strength to break the Division 2 state meet course record and become a dual All-Region honoree before all was said and done."

Walton 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.

Walton joins recent Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Connor Ackley (2022-23, Hilliard Davidson High School), William Zegarski (2021-22, Little Miami High School), Nathan Moore (2020-21, Lake High School) and Caleb Brown (2019-20, Shelby 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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