

**HILL CITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Luke Rupert** of **Hill City High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Rupert is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Hill City 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 Rupert as South Dakota’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-10, 140-pound senior won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 15:26.51, breaking the tape 21.21 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Rangers to the team title. Rupert won six of eight races on the season and was the state’s top finisher at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships, taking 39th with a time of 15:29.4.

A member of the Hill City Fire Department, Rupert has volunteered locally as a mathematics tutor and as a Sunday School teacher at his church. “Luke is one of those kids who seems to have done the work to get to the top,” said Karen Karim, head coach of Custer High School. “He’s run lots of miles, building more year after year and, as he progressed, he won more races. This is not a young man who is naturally a phenom. His success is a product of being a young man who has worked extremely hard to earn every accolade he receives.”

Rupert has maintained a weighted 4.31 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Rupert joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Simeon Birnbaum (2022-23 & 2021-22, Stevens High School), Isaac Davelaar (2020-21, Sioux Falls Christian High School) and Andrew Lauer (2019-20, Lincoln 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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