

**SOUTHLAKE CARROLL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 **Caden Leonard** of **Southlake Carroll High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Leonard is the second Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Southlake Carroll 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 Leonard as Texas' 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, 140-pound sophomore peaked admirably this past season, breaking the tape at the Class 6A state meet in a time of 15:00.1 and leading the Dragons to the team title. Cementing his campaign as the top sophomore in the nation, Leonard notched identical 21st-place finishes at both the Doug Speck Sweepstakes Race at the Woodbridge Classic and the Nike Cross Nationals Final, the latter of which earned Carroll third place as a team. In qualifying for NXN, he clocked a personal-best 14:55.8 to walk away with bronze and First Team All-Region recognition at NXR South.

Leonard has volunteered locally on behalf of the Young Men's Service League, a non-profit organization that initiates and encourages young men and their mothers to pursue philanthropic involvement in their community. He has also donated his time to the local branch of the Special Olympics and has served in youth ministry at White's Chapel Methodist Church. "Caden Leonard lifted his team to a bronze medal at the Nike Cross Nationals Final with a Third Team All-American performance on the heels of taking the individual bronze at the NXN South Regional," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "His state title-winning run was the jewel of the Dragons team championship."

Leonard has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Leonard joins recent Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Kevin Sanchez (2022-23, Vandegrift High School), Emmanuel Sgouros (2021-22, St. John's School), Judson Greer (2020-21, Melissa High School) and Ryan Schoppe (2019-20, La Porte 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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