

**STAR VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WYOMING 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 **Habtamu Wetzel** of **Star Valley High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Wetzel is the third Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Star Valley 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 Wetzel as Wyoming'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, 130-pound junior broke the tape at the Class 4A state meet this past season in a time of 15:48.3, earning his second individual title and powering the Braves to the team gold. Wetzel, unbeaten on Wyoming soil during the season, won five meets. He took ninth at the highly competitive Bob Firman Invitational as the top Wyoming competitor in a personal-best time of 15:29.7 and earned Third Team All-Region honors by finishing 16th at the NXR Northwest Regionals

Wetzel has volunteered as part of multiple community beautification projects and local food drives. He has also donated his time with a wintertime clothing drive and with the Afton Food Pantry. "Habtamu Wetzel was without peer on the Wyoming landscape and also represented very well across state lines at major meets," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "He is the clear choice for the award."

Wetzel has maintained a 3.88 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.

Wetzel joins recent Gatorade Wyoming Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Owen Burnett (2022-23, Mountain View High School), Mason Wheeler (2021-22, Jackson Hole High School) and Peter Visser (2020-2, 2019-20 & 2019-18, Star Valley 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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