

**MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE IDAHO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2025) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Paisley Taylor** of **Meridian High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Idaho Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Taylor is the first Gatorade Idaho **Girls Cross Country** Player of the Year to be chosen from Meridian High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Taylor as Idaho's best high school girls cross country athlete, and she joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, Ca.), Katelyn Tuohy (2017-18, 2018-19 & 2019-20, North Rockland High School, N.Y.) and Addison Ritzenhein (2023-24, Niwot High School, Co.).

The 5-foot-7 senior won the IHSAA Class 6A state meet this past season with an all-class best time of 17:42.29, breaking the tape 11 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. Taylor earned Second Team All-Region honors by taking ninth at the Nike Cross Northwest Regional Championships and finished undefeated against in-state competition last fall. She is a three-time All-State honoree for Meridian.

An experienced piano player who often performs at church meetings and at elderly group homes, Taylor has volunteered locally with the Salvation Army. She has also donated her time on behalf of Sources of Strength, a program designed to prevent adverse outcomes by boosting wellbeing, help-seeking, resiliency and belonging. "Paisley Taylor gained serious speed down the stretch, reaching the final portion of the season as Idaho's premier talent," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "After completing her last prep campaign unbeaten against in-state talent, she further bolstered her stock with Top-10 finishes against national talent in her three biggest invitationals of 2024. A three-time All-State selection, she proved to be a prime-time performer last fall."

Taylor has maintained a weighted 4.04 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run cross country and track at Utah Valley 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 across 12 different high school sports - 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.

Taylor joins recent Gatorade Idaho Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Nelah Roberts (2023-24 & 2021-22, Skyline High School), Anastasia Peters (2022-23, Post Falls High School) and Sammy Smith (2020-21, Boise 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, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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