

**NORRIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 **Kendall Zavala** of **Norris High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Zavala is the first Gatorade Nebraska **Girls Cross Country** Player of the Year to be chosen from Norris 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 Zavala as Nebraska’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 broke the tape at the NSAA Class B state meet this past season, clocking a meet record time of 18:23.9 to finish 10 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and lead the Titans to second place as a team. An Academic All-State selection, Zavala was the top Nebraska finisher at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships, crossing the line 27th in a personal-best 17:56.40. She was also a Class B Super State honoree last fall.

An active member of both the Spanish Club and the Book Club at her school, Zavala has volunteered locally by helping physically challenged youth as a teammate and mentor in the Unified Bowling program as well as with Down To Box, a kickboxing fitness class for individuals with disabilities. She has also donated her time with Marathon Kids, a program designed to combat youth inactivity. “In her two biggest races of the season, Kendall Zavala proved to be at her best,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “First, she broke the state meet course record, then she emerged as the state’s top finisher at the Nike Cross Heartland Regionals with a career PR.”

Zavala has maintained a weighted 4.00 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run cross country and track at University of Nebraska 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.

Zavala joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Claire White (2023-24, Westside High School), Mia Murray (2022-23, Lincoln East High School), Elli Dahl (2021-22, Fremont High School) and Stella Miner (2020-21, Marian 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.