

## **OWASSO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OKLAHOMA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 16, 2025) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Bella Nelson** of **Owasso High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Nelson is the first Gatorade Oklahoma **Girls Cross Country** Player of the Year to be chosen from Owasso 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 Nelson as Oklahoma’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-4 senior raced to victory at the OSSAA Class 6A state meet this past season in a time of 17:27.4 to help steer the Rams to the team championship. Nelson was the top Oklahoma finisher at the Nike Cross South Regional, crossing the finish line in tenth at 17:56.2. A winner in 3 of her 6 races, she placed fourth at the Chile Pepper Festival in Arkansas in a season-best 17:26.0.

Nelson has volunteered locally with the planning and operations of various athletic events on campus, Nelson also has donated her time locally as part of Leadership Group in weekly tutoring of local elementary school students in a variety of subjects throughout the year. “Bella Nelson certainly raised the bar for an already accomplished Owasso High School program after moving in from Colorado her sophomore year,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Not only did she earn her second straight individual state championship this fall, she also led the Rams to a second consecutive state team crown as well. The daughter of 2008 Olympic Games steeplechaser William Nelson, Bella has forged her own path to success in becoming among the Sooner State’s all-time best.”

Nelson has maintained a weighted 3.61 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run cross country and track at Oklahoma State 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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Natalie Duggan (2023-24, Edmond Santa Fe High School), Liesel Kehoe (2022-23, Edmond North High School), Cayden Dawson (2021-22, Bixby High School) and Payton Hinkle (2020-21, Broken Arrow 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](http://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](https://x.com/Gatorade).