

GREEN MOUNTAIN VALLEY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VERMONT 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 **Estella Laird** of **Green Mountain Valley School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Laird is the second Gatorade Vermont **Girls Cross Country** Player of the Year to be chosen from Green Mountain Valley 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 Laird as Vermont’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-6 senior won the Division I state meet this past season with a time of 19:16.70, breaking the tape 15 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. Laird finished 10th at the 89th New England Cross Country Championships, clocking a personal-best 18:32.0 as the state’s top finisher at the event. She also took sixth in the prestigious Manhattan College Cross Country Invitational’s Eastern States championship race, again making her Vermont’s fastest finisher.

A talented Nordic skier, Laird has donated her time locally as a member of her school’s Environmental Action Club and also as a member of her school’s Green Team focused on climate change issues. “She raised her performance this year,” said David Baird, head coach at Champlain Valley Union High School. “Winning at Thetford [Academy’s Woods Trail Run] in the state championship is no easy thing to do. She also did everything this year with her normal grace and incredible sportsmanship.”

Laird has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will attend Williams College this fall, where she will run track and cross country.

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.

Laird joins recent Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Alice Kredell (2023-24, Champlain Valley Union High School), Tess Drury (2022-23, Mount Mansfield Union High School), Ava Thurston (2021-22, Harwood Union High School) and Abby Broadley (2020-21, Bellows Falls Union 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.