

**BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 13, 2025) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Owen Kelley of Bentonville High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Kelley is the fourth Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville 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 Kelley as Arkansas’ best high school boys cross country athlete, and he joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Lukas Verzbicas (2009-10 & 2010-11, Carl Sandburg High School, Illinois), Edward Cheserek (2012-13, St. Benedict's Preparatory School, New Jersey) and Daniel Simmons (2022-23 & 2023-24, American Fork High School, Utah).

The 5-foot-10, 120-pound senior set a new state 5K record at last September’s Olathe Twilight Meet, clocking a personal-best time of 14:50.00. Kelley bookended that performance with an eighth-place finish at the Foot Locker South championships to earn All-Region honors in November. The state’s top runner at the Chile Pepper XC Festival’s El Caliente Division and at the Carroll Invitational in Texas, he took second at the Class 6A state meet, leading the Tigers to the team title. A three-time All-State selection and ranked as the nation’s No. 54 runner last fall in the Dyestat 100, he also finished 24th at December’s national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Kelley has volunteered locally on behalf of the Young Men’s Service League and as a member of the National Honor Society. A devoted parishioner of his church community, he has also donated his time as a youth baseball coach in addition to working at Rush Running, a Bentonville gear and shoe store. “Kelley set a state 5K record early in the season and only poured it on from there, earning First Team All-Region honors at the Foot Locker South meet,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “His runner-up finish at the Class 6A meet sparked the Tigers to the team title and he closed out the year by earning Honorable Mention All-American recognition at Foot Locker nationals.”

Kelley has maintained a weighted 4.2 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Mississippi 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.

Kelley joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Joseph Bariola (2023-24, Lakeside High School), Hudson Betts (2022-23 & 2021-22, Fayetteville High School) and Jack Williams (2020-21, Fayetteville 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.