

**BELEN JESUIT PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 **Marcelo Mantecon** of **Belen Jesuit Preparatory School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Mantecon is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Belen Jesuit Preparatory 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 Mantecon as Florida’s 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-8, 126-pound sophomore won the FHSAA Class 3A state meet this past season with a time of 14:57.8, breaking the tape 24 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Wolverines to their eighth straight team title. A three-time All-State selection, Mantecon took 15th at the national NXN Final to earn Third Team All-America honors—he was the top sophomore in the race. He clocked a 5K personal best of 14:40.2 last fall in winning the Great American XC Festival’s Race of Champions in North Carolina—the second-fastest time in history by a Florida prep.

Mantecon has volunteered locally as part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Miami, packaging food and supplies for the homeless. He has also donated his time with the Abuelos Foundation, providing company and comfort to the elderly. “For the second consecutive year, Marcelo Mantecon proved to be at the head of his class, finishing as the nation’s top sophomore after being crowned as America’s top frosh in 2023,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Although occasionally afflicted with serious back spasms while racing, the precocious sophomore’s mind-over-body attitude propelled him to become Florida’s No. 2 prep boy at 5K in history.”

Mantecon has maintained a weighted 4.01 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Mantecon joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Patrick Koon (2023-24 & 2022-23, Leon High School) and Rheinhardt Harrison (2021-22 & 2020-21, Nease 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.