

**OLATHE WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Braxton Theel** of **Olathe West High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Theel is the first Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Olathe West 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 Theel as Kansas’ 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-9, 135-pound senior won the KSHSAA Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 15:20.11, earning the Bob Timmons Award as the meet’s fastest overall performer and leading the Owls to fifth place as a team. Theel also broke the tape in the Boys Maroon race at Minnesota’s Roy Griak Invitational with a time of 16:16.4. He clocked a 5K personal-best and school-record time of 15:01.9 last fall to take fourth at the Olathe Twilight Invitational.

A member of the Future Farmers of America, Theel has volunteered locally at Harvesters Food Pantry, a regional food bank for families in need. He has also donated his time as a Youthfront Teen Camp leader and as a youth coach at soccer, cross country and track and field camps. “Braxton Theel sandwiched big victories at the prestigious Roy Griak Invitational and the state meet around a series of impressive regular-season clockings to solidify himself as the premier distance talent in Kansas,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack.

Theel has maintained a weighted 3.73 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Theel joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Clay Shively (2023-24, Trinity Academy), Colby King (2022-23, St. Thomas Aquinas High School), Logan Seger (2021-22, Saint Thomas Aquinas High School) and Daniel Harkin (2020-21, Manhattan 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.