

**FREELAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MICHIGAN BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (February 13, 2025) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **TJ Hansen of Freeland High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Hansen is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Freeland 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 Hansen as Michigan’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-10, 125-pound senior raced to second place at the national NXN Final this past season, clocking a 15:30.60—just 2.5 seconds off the winning pace—to earn First Team All-American recognition. Ranked No. 3 in the national Dyestat Top 100 last fall, Hansen broke the tape at the MHSAA Division 2 LP Finals with a time of 14:50.50, finishing nearly seven seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor. The state’s returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Player of the Year, he took fifth at the NXN Midwest Regional and was the top Michigan runner at Indiana’s Nike XC Town Twilight Invitational, where he finished second. He set a 5K personal-best by winning the Shepherd Invite in 14:41.55.

Hansen has donated his time extensively on behalf of the school district’s middle school track program. He has also volunteered locally by mowing, edging, lining and painting Freeland’s home cross country facility. “TJ Hansen was a national title contender all season and was easily one of the top three to five boys prep runners in the country throughout 2024,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack.

Hansen has maintained a 3.65 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Colorado 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.

Two-time winner Hansen joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Hunter Jones (2022-23, Benzie Central High School), Riley Hough (2021-22, Hartland High School) and Nathan Walker (2020-21, Fremont 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).