

**BISMARCK CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 **Wil Ihmels** of **Bismarck Century High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Ihmels is the first Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Bismarck Century 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 Ihmels as North Dakota’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, 130-pound senior won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 15:15.8, breaking the tape 6.5 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Patriots to third place as a team. A transfer from Timberline (Idaho) High School, Ihmels took 14th at the Nike Cross Heartland Regional Championships and finished 35th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional Championships. He was unbeaten against in-state competition. His younger sister, Ruby, is the 2024-25 North Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year.

Ihmels has built a computer from scratch and has volunteered locally at youth cross country and track meets. “Wil was a great runner this year,” said Shane Wahlstrom, head coach of Williston High School. “He raced at the front with confidence and with a purpose. Wil is super-competitive and seemed to have a great strategy for each race this fall.”

Ihmels has maintained a weighted 4.07 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.

Ihmels joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Owen Sondag (2023-24, Fargo North High School), Brady Korsmo (2022-23, Bismarck High School), Aiden Johnson (2021-22, Sheyenne High School) and Sean Korsmo (2020-21, Bismarck 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.