

**KNOXVILLE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 **Keegan Smith** of **Knoxville Catholic High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Knoxville Catholic 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 Smith as Tennessee’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, 133-pound senior won his second TSSAA Division II Class AA championship this past season with a time of 14:59.16, breaking the tape 10.3 seconds clear of his next-closest competitor in leading the Fighting Irish to the team title. A four-time All-State selection, Smith was the only runner in the country to finish among the top six in both elite national championship meets. He was also one of just two prep boys to win a pair of regional titles. Smith will graduate as a First Team All-American as named by the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships and by the national NXN Final. He clocked a 5K personal-best of 14:23.26 in winning the NXN Southeast Regional title.

Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of the Ladies of Charity as well as the Knoxville Bridge Ministry and the Columbus Home Children’s Shelter and Assessment Center, which houses at-risk youth. He has also donated his time to hands-on service projects for the community through his school’s Rotary Interact Club and has been instrumental in organizing a clean-up and landscaping project for a cemetery. “Keegan Smith’s lights-out kick at Nike Cross Southeast truly ranked as among the nation’s jaw-dropping moments of 2024,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “The best nationals double-qualifier this past season, he proved himself to be among the country’s distance elite last fall.”

Smith has maintained a 4.44 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.

Three-time winner Smith joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Colin Eckerman (2023-24, The Webb School of Knoxville) and Aiden Britt (2020-21, Lebanon 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.

###