

**CARROLL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 **Caden Leonard** of **Carroll Senior High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Leonard is the third Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Carroll Senior 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 Leonard as Texas’ 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 state’s returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-2, 145-pound junior won his second straight UIL Class 6A state meet this past season, breaking the tape with a time of 14:50.1 and leading the Dragons to a sixth straight team title. A two-time national NXN Final All-American, Leonard took third at this year’s national championships after winning the NXN South Regional. He clocked a 5K personal-best of 14:33.5 in winning the District 4 postseason championship last fall.

An avid hunter and fisherman, Leonard has volunteered locally on behalf of the Young Men’s Service League, a non-profit organization that initiates and encourages young men and their mothers to pursue philanthropic efforts in their community. He has also donated his time as a counselor at youth running camps and with the Special Olympics in addition to serving in youth ministry at White’s Chapel Methodist Church. “Caden Leonard is like a surgeon on the cross country course, his tactics and technique carry the utmost precision,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Now a two-time state champion, he could emerge as the nation’s best in 2025.”

Leonard has maintained an A average in the classroom. He will begin his senior 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.

Two-time winner Leonard joins recent Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Kevin Sanchez (2022-23, Vandegrift High School), Emmanuel Sgouros (2021-22, St. John’s School) and Judson Greer (2020-21, Melissa 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.