

**HERITAGE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 30, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Sidney Stegall** of **Heritage Academy** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year**. Stegall is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Heritage Academy.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Stegall as Mississippi's best high school boys cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, Stegall joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Parker Wolfe (2020-21, Cherry Creek High School, Greenwood Village, Colo.), Nico Young (2019-20, Newbury Park High School, Newbury Park, Calif.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

The 5-foot-11, 140-pound senior raced to victory at the MAIS Class 5A state meet this past season with a time of 16:17.5. Stegall went on to win the All-State Meet by a nine-second margin with a personal-best clocking of 15:31.0. He was the state's top finisher at the Wingfoot Classic, where he took 21st overall.

Stegall has served as vice-president of his school's Student Government Association and as an officer in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. "Heritage Academy senior Sidney Stegall closed down his senior campaign in convincing fashion, not only posting the fastest all-class time at the MAIS championships, but also winning the Mississippi All-State Meet," said PrepCalTrack editor Rich Gonzalez. "Between cross country and track and field, he has amassed seven state championships to date in his prep career."

Stegall has maintained a 4.43 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Mississippi College this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school 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.

Stegall joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Cross Country Players of the Year Keegan Leverett (2021-22, Saint Stanislaus College), Christian Balcer (2020-21 & 2019-20, East Central High School), and Brock Kelly (2018-19, Tupelo Christian Preparatory School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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 Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).