

MADISON RIDGELAND ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 30, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Kennedy Sanders of Madison Ridgeland Academy is the 2021-22 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Player of the Year. Sanders is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Madison Ridgeland 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 Sanders as Mississippi's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Sanders joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa), Allyson Felix (2002-03, Los Angeles Baptist High School, Calif.), Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas), Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 5-foot-6 senior sprinter won three individual state titles (in 100-, 200- and 400-meter dash) along with a shared relay crown at the MAIS 6A State Meet this past season, leading the Patriots to the team title. Sanders added two more victories in the 200 and 400 at the Mississippi T&F Meet of Champions. Sanders' six gold medals came at distances from 100 to 400 meters. In this spring's MAIS 6A 4x100-meter relay, she ran the anchor leg for a foursome that clocked a 49.23 to break an all-class MAIS record set in 1972. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Track & Field Player of the Year, her season-best times in the 100 (11.75) and 200 (24.02) both ranked among the nation's Top 65 girls prep competitors in 2022. At the time of her selection, Sanders' season-best clocking of 54.09 in the 400 was tied for the nation's No. 25 time among prep girls in 2022. A USA Track & Field Southern Association All-American, she graduated as the MAIS all-class state record-holder in 200 and 400, and the MAIS Class 5A record-holder in 100.

A member of the Youth Restoration Community Church, Sanders has served on behalf of its youth ministry, assisting adolescents. She has also volunteered with the church community's Youth Initiative, feeding families in need on holidays and assisting with backpack giveaways to underserved children. This spring, she organized track clinics for local elementary and middle school girls. "Sanders is a talented sprinter with excellent range," said Erik Boal, an editor at Dyestat. "She closed out her career in style with three individual titles at the state meet and shared in her team's record-breaking 4-x-100 relay clocking. She graduated having staked a claim as a 'different-level' competitor with three national Top 100 times, including No. 25 in the 400."

Sanders has maintained a 3.39 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at LSU 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.

Two-time winner Sanders joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Brooklyn Biancamano (2019-20 & 2018-19, Long Beach High School) and Asia Poe (2017-18, Madison Central High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Sanders has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Sanders is also eligible to submit a short video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

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 Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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