

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)**

**NITRO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Luke Nichols of Nitro High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Nichols is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Nitro High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the track, distinguishes Nichols as West Virginia's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Nichols joins an elite alumni association of state track & field award-winners, 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 (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-2, 173-pound senior won the high jump at the Group AA state meet for a third straight year this past season, leading the Wildcats to an 11th-place finish as a team. Nichols' twice cleared 6 feet, 10 inches in the high jump this spring—that height ranked No. 25 in the nation among prep competitors in 2018 at the time of his selection.

An avid snowboarder, Nichols has volunteered locally as part of a fundraising effort to benefit cystic fibrosis research. He has also donated his time on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Luke leapt six inches higher than the kid that finished second to him at the state meet," said Lance Moore, head coach of Herbert Hoover High. "He dominated his event as much or more than any other athlete in the state."

Nichols has maintained a weighted 4.39 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Louisville 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 work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Nichols joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Freddy Canary (2016-17, South Harrison High School), Tristan Slater (2015-16, Poca High School), Christian Buckley (2014-15 & 2013-14, Poca High School), Jacob Burcham (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2009-10, Cabell Midland High School), Brandon Franklin (, Liberty), Zach Tennant (2008-09, North Marion), Eric Myers (2007-08, Sissonville), and Josh Brown (2006-07, Jefferson) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nichols will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit [www.gatorade.com/poy](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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