

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

**CHICAGO** (June 24, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **EJ Richardson III of Bethel High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Virginia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year**. Richardson III is the first Gatorade Virginia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Bethel 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 Richardson III as 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, Richardson III 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-1, 150-pound senior swept the 200- and 400-meter dash at the Class 5A state meet this past season, leading the Bruins to a third-place finish as a team. Richardson's winning time in the 400 of 46.55 seconds ranked No. 8 in the nation among prep competitors in 2019 at the time of his selection. His personal-best of 21.32 in the 200 ranked No. 65 in the country. Also a top hurdler, Richardson clocked the No. 12 performance in the nation in the 400-meter intermediate hurdles and No. 60 in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles. He concluded his prep indoor and outdoor track career with 17 state titles.

A member of the Bethel High Junior ROTC program, Richardson has volunteered locally as both a peer and youth mentor. "Watching EJ run on the track is gracefulness in action," said Nanette Solomon-Gaines, head coach of Bethel High School. "What's so impressive about him is his unmatched strength. The latter half of his race is always stronger than the first half, so to witness him accelerate through a race and finish stronger than he started is unreal."

Richardson has maintained a weighted 4.04 GPA in the classroom and graduated with an advanced diploma. He has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of South Carolina beginning 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Richardson III joins recent Gatorade Virginia Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Daiqwaun Faircloth (2017-18, Nansemond River High School), Brandon McGorty (2016-17, Chantilly High School), Grant Holloway (2015-16 & 2014-15, Grassfield High School) and John Warren (2013-14, Prince George High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Richardson III also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

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 [www.Gatorade.com/POY](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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