

**MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 29, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Sam Hankins of Manhattan High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Kansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Hankins is the first Gatorade Kansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Manhattan 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 field, distinguishes Hankins as Kansas' 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 July, Hankins 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 (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-1, 180-pound senior finished his high school career unbeaten in state championship competition, winning the Class 6A outdoor title in the javelin as a freshman, sophomore and junior. Ranked as the nation's No. 12 recruit in the Class of 2020 by MileSplit, Hankins launched the javelin a career-best 224 feet, six inches in 2019, which was the No. 1 high school throw in the U.S. last spring and ranked as the nation's No. 18 mark in prep history. He won the Great Southwest Classic, the Kansas Relays and the Texas relays in 2019, while also capturing second place at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor.

Hankins has volunteered locally assisting a rancher suffering from multiple sclerosis and has also served as a youth track and field coach. "Sam Hankins would have been the best javelin thrower in the country this spring, there's no question," said Tom Pukstys, USATF National Javelin Coordinator. "He's an extremely competitive kid who studies his craft and always wants to learn more. He was already throwing over 235 feet in practice and I think he would have gone further if the season wasn't cancelled. I think he'll immediately be one of the top four or five guys in the NCAA next year."

Hankins has maintained a 3.87 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Texas A&M University.

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.

Hankins joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Tim Lambert (2018-19, Smoky Valley High School), Michael Hoffer (2017-18, Shawnee Heights High School), Kyler True (2016-17, Olpe High School), Noah Green (2015-16, Blue Valley Southwest High School), Willie Morrison (2014-15, Leavenworth High School), and Kord Ferguson (2012-2013 & 2013-14, Ottawa High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.