

**VALOR CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE COLORADO BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 29, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Radek Birkholz of Valor Christian High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Colorado Baseball Player of the Year**. Birkholz is the first Gatorade Colorado Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Valor Christian 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 Birkholz as Colorado's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Birkholz joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 5-foot-11, 195-pound senior right-handed pitcher and shortstop compiled a 5-0 record on the mound with a 0.48 ERA and 60 strikeouts in 29 innings this past season, leading the Eagles to a 16-4 record and a berth in the Class 5A semifinals. The state's No. 3 draft prospect as ranked by Perfect Game, Birkholz also posted a .478 batting average with seven home runs, 29 RBI and an OPS of 1.520.

A member of the National Honor Society, Birkholz has served as a student leader on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic and has volunteered locally on behalf of his church community. "As a head coach for 20 years, I can say Radek Birkholz is not only one of the best players I have seen in Colorado over that time span, but also one of the best kids," said Brad Madden, head coach at Ralston Valley High. "He is a great competitor, an unbelievable player and a humble young man."

Birkholz has maintained a 4.14 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Notre Dame 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Birkholz joins recent Gatorade Colorado Baseball Players of the Year Jack Moss (2019-20, Cherry Creek High School), Riley Cornelio (2018-19, Pine Creek High School), Justin Olson (2017-18, Pine Creek High School), and Cole Winn (2016-17, Silver Creek High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Birkholz has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Birkholz is also eligible to submit a 30-second 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 \$2.7 million across 1,117 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, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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