

**WATERFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT 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 **Connor Podeszwa of Waterford High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Player of the Year**. Podeszwa is the third Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Waterford 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 Podeszwa as Connecticut'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, Podeszwa 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 6-foot-1, 190-pound senior right-handed pitcher, infielder and outfielder compiled an 8-0 record on the mound with a 0.92 ERA and 83 strikeouts to just seven walks in 49 innings this past season, leading the Lancers to an 18-2 record and a berth in the Class M semifinals. A 2021 Eastern Connecticut Conference Spring All-Star, Podeszwa also posted a .343 batting average with 26 RBI, 11 stolen bases and an OPS of 1.010.

A member of his school's student council, Podeszwa has volunteered locally on behalf of his church's annual food festival and as a youth baseball coach. "Connor Podeszwa is a player that has fueled his love for the game with hard work," said Waterford High head coach Art Peluso. "A two-way talent, he has been dominant on the mound. His fearless attitude and willingness to not back down have earned him a reputation as the best pitcher in the conference."

Podeszwa has maintained a 3.80 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Tufts University 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.

Podeszwa joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Players of the Year Jared Burrows (2019-20, Waterford High School), Chad Knight (2018-19, Staples High School), Patrick Winkel (2017-18, Amity Regional High School), and Ben Casparius (2016-17, Staples High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Podeszwa has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Podeszwa 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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