

**ST. PIUS X HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Matthew Cornelius of St. Pius X High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade New Mexico Baseball Player of the Year**. Cornelius is the second Gatorade New Mexico Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Pius X 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 Cornelius as New Mexico'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, Cornelius 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, 185-pound senior left-handed pitcher and center fielder had led the Sartans to a 15-2 record, an undefeated regular season in their district and a No. 1 seed in the Class 4A postseason tournament at the time of his selection. Also the District 5-AAAA Player of the Year and a First Team All-District honoree as both a pitcher and an outfielder, Cornelius compiled a 5-0 record on the mound with a 0.80 ERA and 79 strikeouts in 44 innings. The two-year captain also posted a WHIP of 0.71, while opponents hit just .110 against him. Cornelius entered the postseason on a consecutive scoreless-inning streak of 13 and had pitched 30 no-walk innings through 17 games. At the plate, he posted a .463 batting average with five doubles, a triple and a home run, driving in 14 runs and scoring 19. Cornelius also stole seven bases and produced an OBP of .607 and an OPS of 1.314. He made the 2020 Arizona Fall Classic All-Tournament Team despite only recently having recovered from a bout with COVID-19.

A tribal language translator, Shalako celebrant and habitat builder for the tribal community at the Pueblo of Zuni, Cornelius received the Native American Leadership Award at his school in 2021. He has volunteered locally on behalf of the Barrett House shelter for women and children facing homelessness, the New Mexico Roadrunner Food Bank, the Seed-to-Need farming and harvesting initiative combatting food insecurity and Rio Rancho Community Cleanup. He's also served as a counselor for the Baseball Miracles, Inc. camp for impoverished youth who are survivors of trauma. Also a first prize winner in his school's art show, he spends his spare time customizing decorative sneaker apparel for children in need. "Matthew Cornelius is one of the most dominant pitchers in the Southwest," said Manzano High head coach Tim Campos. "This level of performance comes from an extraordinary work ethic and commitment to his craft. His mental fortitude, resilience and grit are all uncommon. He has led his team to be successful because of it and he's a great example for what it means to be humble, successful and a fierce competitor. His leadership on and off the field as well as his service to others prove he is worthy of this prestigious award."

Cornelius has maintained a 3.07 GPA in the classroom. He will attend Pima Community College this fall, where he will play baseball.

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.

Cornelius joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Baseball Players of the Year Noah Brewer (2019-20, Rio Rancho High School), Hayden Walker (2018-19, St. Pius X High School), Chase Silseth (2017-18, Piedra Vista High School), and Trevor Rogers (2016-17, Carlsbad High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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