

**HAMLIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (July 2, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Gracelyn Leiseth of Hamlin High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Leiseth is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Hamlin 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 Leiseth as South Dakota's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Leiseth 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 5-foot-11 sophomore swept the shot put and discus events at the Class A state meet this past season, leading the Chargers to a sixth-place finish as a team. At the time of her selection, Leiseth's state-winning put of the shot—45 feet, 5 inches—ranked No. 45 nationally among 2021 prep competitors in the event. Her winning discus throw of 149-3 ranked No. 47 nationally. She set meet records in the shot and discus at the Lake Central Conference Meet as well as in the discus record at the Northeast Conference Meet.

Leiseth has volunteered as a barista at the Mission Coffeehouse in Brookings, which raises money for missions both locally and internationally. She has also donated her time as a Vacation Bible School teacher and with the Special Olympics. "Gracelyn has spent countless hours perfecting her technique in shot put and discus," said Dan Poppen, head coach of Hamlin High. "She always has a positive attitude and is one of the most coachable athletes I have ever had the opportunity to work with."

Leiseth has maintained a weighted 3.98 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Leiseth joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Jasmine Greer (2019-20 & 2018-19, Roosevelt High School), Shayla Howell (2017-18, Belle Fourche High School), and Krista Bickley (2016-17, Brandon Valley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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