COLUMBUS NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE INDIANA BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (July 8, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Tucker Smith of Columbus North High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Columbus North 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 Smith as Indiana's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Smith 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-4, 260-pound junior eclipsed the 24-year-old state meet record in the shot put a whopping five times this past season, ultimately winning the state title with a heave of 68 feet, 7.75 inches. Smith broke the overall state record earlier in the season with a throw of 69-4.5. He also won the shot put event at the National Throws Festival in June.

Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of a youth track program. "Tucker is that special athlete who has recognized his talent and potential and is correspondingly working to make the most of that talent," said Columbus North coach Rick Sluder. "We have to cut off his throwing sessions at night or he'll continue to work out. We have to pull him when injured or he'll just push through the pain. I have not coached a more complete athlete."

Smith has maintained a 3.44 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Jason Swarens (2019-20, South Vigo High School), Cole Hocker (2018-19, Cathedral High School), Nate Patterson (2017-18, Plymouth High School), and Ryan Lipe (2016-17, Carmel High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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