

**PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 **Mario Paul of Paul Laurence Dunbar High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Paul is the first Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Paul Laurence Dunbar 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 Paul as Kentucky'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, Paul 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-1, 165-pound senior set a state record in the 300-meter hurdles at the Class AAA state meet this past season, leading the Bulldogs to a ninth-place finish as a team. At the time of his selection, Paul's winning time of 36.74 seconds ranked No. 9 in the nation among 2021 prep competitors in his event. He also took second in the 110-meter hurdles and fourth in the 200-meter dash at the state meet. His season-best run of 52.27 in the 400-meter hurdles at the Henry Clay All-Comers ranked No. 3 nationally and was just shy of his state-record 52.23 set in July, 2020.

Paul has volunteered locally with the Salvation Army and donated his time to a food bank and homeless shelter. "Mario is one of the hardest-working kids I know," said Demetrius Gay, head coach of Henry Clay High. "He was the most dominant hurdler in the state."

Paul has maintained a weighted 3.24 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Houston 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.

Paul joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Christian Lewis (2019-20, Frederick Douglass High School), Langston Jackson (2018-19, Henry Clay High School), Bryan Hudson (2017-18, Scott County High School), and Isaiah McCall (2016-17, Bryan Station High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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