

**WESTERVILLE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 **Justin Braun of Westerville Central High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Ohio Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Braun is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Westerville Central 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 Braun as Ohio'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, Braun 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-3, 190-pound junior won three individual events at the Division 1 state meet this past season, leading the Warhawks to second place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year in boys track, Braun won the 400-meter run in 46.14 seconds, which ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among 2021 prep competitors. He also captured the 100-meter dash in a meet-record time of 10.47 and took the 200 in 21.13.

Braun has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track programs. "Justin is blessed with the genetics of a great sprinter and athlete, but what sets him apart from others is his work ethic, dedication, and determination," said Westerville Central coach Jason Loughman. "He is an extremely focused athlete who pays attention to all the little details: rest, nutrition, strength work and goal setting, along with his running workouts."

Braun has maintained a 3.50 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.

Two-time winner Braun (2019-20, Thomas Worthington High School) joins recent Gatorade Ohio Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Evan Matthews (2018-19, Pickerington Central High School), Dustin Horter (2017-18, Lakota East High School), and Max Frye (2016-17, New Albany High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###