

**ST. RAPHAEL ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 **Darius Kipyego of St. Raphael Academy** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Kipyego is the second Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Raphael Academy.

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 Kipyego as Rhode Island'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, Kipyego 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 state's returning Gatorade Boys Track & Field Player of the Year, the 5-foot-8, 147-pound senior won the 800-meter run at the All-State meet this past season, leading the Saints to an eighth-place finish as a team. At the time of his selection, Kipyego's season-best 800 time of 1:50.71 at May's Platinum PT Qualifier ranked No. 12 nationally among 2021 prep competitors. He also ranked in the Top 20 nationally in the 1,500-meter run with a personal-best time of 3:54.74 and he set the state record in the 800 (1:48.82) in July, 2020.

Kipyego has volunteered as part of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "One of the best things about Darius that has been so evident this spring is his versatility," said Amy Noecker, head coach of Mount St. Charles High. "He can tackle just about any distance around the oval and he always makes it look effortless."

Kipyego has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Iowa State University 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 Kipyego joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Conor Murphy (2018-19, Classical High School), Jeffery Pedersen (2017-18, East Greenwich High School), and D.J. Principe (2016-17, La Salle Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

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