

**WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Cooper Mack of Watertown High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Mack is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Watertown 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 Mack as South Dakota'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, Mack 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-2, 260-pound senior swept the shot put and discus events at the Class AA state meet this past season, leading the Arrows to a sixth-place finish as a team. Mack set a state meet record in the shot with his toss of 66 feet, 6.75 inches. He won the discus by more than 18 feet with a throw of 179-5. At the time of his selection, Mack's personal-best shot of 67-3.5 at the Huron Invitational in Louisiana in April ranked No. 4 nationally among 2021 prep competitors. His personal-best discus throw of 185-10 ranked No. 25 nationally.

Mack has volunteered locally at the Watertown Christian School and as a youth track coach, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Talent-wise, Cooper is one of the best I have ever seen," said Chad Rohde, head coach of Watertown High. "He is a very gifted young man. Watching him throw the shot and disc is unexplainable—to see something with that quality, it could be years before we witness that caliber of track athlete again."

Mack has maintained a weighted 3.87 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Baylor 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.

Mack joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Tyler Hiatt (2019-20 & 2018-19, Lincoln High School), Trevor Begeman (2017-18, Selby Area High School), and Collin Brison (2016-17, Lincoln High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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