

**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Josh Edwards of University High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Edwards is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from University 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 Edwards as West Virginia'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, Edwards 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.).

Also a two-time Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Player of the Year, the 5-foot-7, 125-pound junior swept the 1,600 and 3,200-meter run events at the Class AAA state meet this past season, leading the Hawks to a third-place finish as a team. Edwards set a meet record in the 3200 and also ran the anchor leg on University's winning 4x800-meter relay quartet. At the time of his selection, Edwards' personal-best 3200 time of 8:49.04 at the Mountaineer Showcase in May was a state record and ranked No. 8 nationally among 2021 prep competitors. He also ranked in the Top 10 nationally in the 1600 and the 2-mile run.

Edwards has volunteered locally with the Special Olympics and as a youth running coach. "Josh is a future superstar," said Rod O'Donnell, head coach of Parkersburg High. "If he stays healthy, he will break four minutes [in the mile] while in high school. He has a great work ethic. He pays the price through hard work."

Edwards has maintained a 3.97 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.

Edwards joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Sebastian Spencer (2019-20, Weir High School), Gavin Beverage (2018-19, Cabell Midland High School), Luke Nichols (2017-18, Nitro High School), and Freddy Canary (2016-17, South Harrison High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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