

**VERONA AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 **Jackson Acker of Verona Area High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Acker is the second Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Verona Area 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 Acker as Wisconsin'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, Acker 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, 225-pound senior swept the shot put and discus events at the Division 1 state meet this past season, leading the Wildcats to a fourth-place finish as a team. Acker also ran the anchor leg on Verona's 4x-100-meter relay team, which placed sixth. At the time of his selection, his personal-best discus toss of 207 feet, 6 inches ranked No. 2 nationally among 2021 prep competitors. The teen, whose track season got off to a late start because he was playing running back for the Verona High football team this spring, also ranked in the Top 100 nationally in the shot put this season with a personal-best throw of 58-5.

A member of the Young Life ministry, Acker has volunteered locally as a youth football and track coach. "The thing that impressed me most about Jackson was his ability to be consistent," said Bill Richardson, head coach of Madison Memorial High. "I have seen athletes throw over 200 feet in discus once in a season, but to do it multiple times in different wind and weather conditions shows that he is truly special."

Acker has maintained a 3.47 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of Wisconsin 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.

Acker joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Davis Wenthe (2019-20, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau High School), Drew Bosley (2018-19 & 2017-18, Homestead High School), and Austin Glynn (2016-17, Onalaska High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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