

**CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE PENNSYLVANIA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 3, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Paxton Kling** of **Central High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Pennsylvania Baseball Player of the Year**. Kling is the first Gatorade Pennsylvania Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from 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 Kling as Pennsylvania's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Kling joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-07, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-2, 208-pound senior shortstop and center fielder batted .585 with four home runs, 29 RBI, 43 runs and 33 stolen bases, leading the Dragons (23-0) to first place in the Laurel Highlands Athletic Conference and a berth in the Class 3A state tournament, scheduled to begin June 7. The state's No. 1 player as rated by Perfect Game and the nation's No. 7 prospect player in the Class of 2022 according to the Prep Baseball Report, Kling struck out just four times in 96 plate appearances and has amassed an OPS of 1.716 this season. He was a 2021 Perfect Game All-American Game invitee and a member of the 2021 Team USA 18U National Team.

Kling has volunteered locally as a peer mentor and as a youth baseball coach and camp instructor. "Paxton Kling is a kid that does all the little things correctly," said Adam Arnold, head coach at Bedford High School. "In the two games we faced him this year, it was easy to see his raw power on display during batting practice and his speed on the basepaths, but to me, it was the care and detail he took in his mental approach. He's a vocal leader of that team, but more a leader by his actions and how he approaches the game. He is an incredible athlete and a fierce competitor."

Kling has maintained a 95.4 average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Louisiana State University this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in July's Major League Baseball draft.

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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Kling joins recent Gatorade Pennsylvania Baseball Players of the Year Benny Montgomery (2020-21, Red Land High School), Nick Bitsko (2019-20, Central Bucks East High School), Chris Newell (2018-19, Malvern Preparatory School), and Michael Siani (2017-18, William Penn Charter School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Kling has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Kling is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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