

**COLUMBUS NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE INDIANA BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 29, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Tucker Smith** of **Columbus North High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Columbus North 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 Smith as Indiana'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, Smith 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 (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-3, 270-pound senior shattered his own state record in the shot put this past season, hurling the shot 72 feet, 0.5 inches, which ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2022 as well as No. 14 in U.S. prep history. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year in boys track and field, Smith repeated as state champion in the shot put with a mark of 66-6.75 and also took second in the discus.

Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of a youth track program. "Tucker is the hardest worker on the team, even though he's the most talented athlete," said Columbus North High School coach Rick Sluder. "He actually sacrificed some of his potential in the shot put this year to work even harder on his discus-throwing, because our team was in contention to win a state championship. He could have been inches or even feet further, but he chose instead to help his team."

Smith has maintained a 3.44 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner Smith joins recent Gatorade Indiana Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Jason Swarens (2019-20, South Vigo High School), Cole Hocker (2018-19, Cathedral High School), and Nate Patterson (2017-18, Plymouth High 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, Smith 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. Smith 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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