

**SOUTHERN BOONE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 **Connor Burns** of **Southern Boone High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Missouri Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Burns is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Southern Boone 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 Burns as Missouri'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, Burns 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, 135-pound junior shattered the state record for the mile this past season with a time of 3:58.83 at the Hoka Festival of Miles, which ranked as the nation's No. 3 performance among prep competitors in 2022 and No. 5 in U.S. prep history. Burns' time was the fastest ever run by a high school junior, passing the 58-year-old mark set by legend Jim Ryun. Burns broke another state record while winning the 3200-meter run at the Class 3 state meet with a time of 8:48.76, and placed second in the 1600. He also won the 2-mile run at the Brooks PR Invitational in 8:45.52—the nation's fastest clocking in 2022.

President of his school's Student Council, Burns has served as a math tutor and has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank. "Connor has a grind like no other—he shows up day-in and day-out with his hard hat on," said Southern Boone coach Adrian Cummings. "He's very goal-oriented, he leads from the front and he's a very good teammate."

Burns has maintained a 4.0 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Burns joins recent Gatorade Missouri Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Johnny Brackins Jr. (2020-21, Lee's Summit High School), Brandon Miller (2019-20, John Burroughs School School), Justin Robinson (2018-19, Hazelwood West High School), and KC Lightfoot (2017-18, Lee's Summit 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, Burns 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. Burns 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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