

**STEVENS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Simeon Birnbaum** of **Stevens High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Birnbaum is the sixth Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Stevens 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 Birnbaum as South Dakota'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, Birnbaum 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 state's 2021-22 Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, the 6-foot, 145-pound junior became the 16th high-school-age boy in history to break 4 minutes in the mile run this past year. Birnbaum crossed the line in 3:59.51 to win the mile at the Brooks PR Invitational, setting a state record with a time that ranked No. 5 nationally among prep competitors in 2022 at the time of his selection. Birnbaum set a state record when he finished second in the 800-meter run in 1:50.12 at Nike Outdoor Nationals, and he produced another state-best mark with a winning time of 8:55.22 in the 3,200-meter run at the Howard Wood Relays. He swept the 800, 1,600 and 3,200 at the Class AA state meet, leading the Raiders to a second-place finish as a team.

The first chair alto saxophone player in the Stevens High jazz band, Birnbaum has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "Simeon dominated this year," said Greg Murley, head coach of Aberdeen Central High School. "He is not only a strong runner, he is good at race tactics. It will be fun to see how far running will take him."

Birnbaum has maintained a 3.85 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.

Birnbaum joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Cooper Mack (2020-21, Watertown High School), Tyler Hiatt (2019-20 & 2018-19, Lincoln High School), and Trevor Begeman (2017-18, Selby Area 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, Birnbaum 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. Birnbaum 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.