

**WALTER PANAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 2, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Samuel Stafura** of **Walter Panas High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade New York Baseball Player of the Year**. Stafura is the first Gatorade New York Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Walter Panas 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 Stafura as New York’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, Stafura joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jackson Holliday (2021-22, Stillwater High School, Okla.), Bobby Witt Jr. (2018-19, Colleyville Heritage High School, Texas), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas) and Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot, 192-pound senior shortstop had led the Panthers to a 23-3 record, a sectional title and a berth in the Class A state tournament. Stafura batted .562 through 26 games, with 10 home runs, 37 RBI, 27 stolen bases and a slugging percentage of 1.200. A Rawlings/Perfect Game Preseason First Team All-American, he was named league MVP and he’s a three-time All-Section selection. He’s ranked as the nation’s No. 34 prospect in the Class of 2023 by Perfect Game USA.

Stafura has volunteered locally on behalf of a food pantry, toy-donation drives and youth baseball programs. “Stafura’s baseball IQ is the best I’ve seen from a high school player,” said C.J. Riefenhauser, head coach at Yorktown High School. “He not only hits for power, he uses the whole field. And with his speed, if he gets on first base, it’s almost an automatic triple. Defensively, he’s the best player in New York.”

Stafura has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Clemson 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.

Stafura joins recent Gatorade New York Baseball Players of the Year Mike Kennedy (2021-22, Troy High School), Casey Saucke (2020-21, Greece Athena High School), Jason Savacool (2019-20, Charles W. Baker High School), and Joe Vetrano (2018-19, Lakeland High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade’s Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade’s social impact partners, supporting Gatorade’s ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.