

**PADUA ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE DELAWARE GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 28, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Juliana Balon** of **Padua Academy** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Delaware Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Balon is the sixth Gatorade Delaware Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Padua Academy.

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 Balon as Delaware’s best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Balon joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jasmine Moore (2018-19, Lake Ridge High School, Texas), Sydney McLaughlin (2016-17, 2015-16 & 2014-15, Union Catholic High School, N.J.), and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa).

The state’s returning Gatorade Girls Track & Field Player of the Year, the 5-foot-8 junior was the only athlete in any division at the state championship meet to win four individual titles, leading the Pandas to the state title with victories in the 100-, 200- and 400-meter dashes, as well as the long jump. Balon earned All-American honors by taking third in the long jump at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor with a state-record leap of 20 feet, 3.5 inches, which ranked No. 8 nationally among girls prep competitors this spring. She was an Indoor Track All-American thanks to a fifth-place finish in the long jump at New Balance Nationals Indoor.

Balon is a member of the Padua Academy STEM Club and Anatomy Dissection Club. She has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit the Vietnam Veterans Chapter 83 Delaware in honor of her grandfather. She has also donated her time as a youth track coach. “Juliana Balon had already established a high standard in her career by winning four individual state titles as a sophomore, then she duplicated the feat this year in even more impressive fashion,” said Erik Boal, editor at DyeStat.com. “Padua Academy boasts one of the most well-rounded lineups in state history, and Balon remains a catalyst for the Pandas.”

Balon has maintained a 3.73 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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.

Two-time winner Balon joins recent Gatorade Delaware Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Charlee Crawford (2020-21, St. Georges Technical High School), Erin Kelleher (2019-20, Padua Academy), and Destiny Bailey-Perkins (2018-19, Caesar Rodney 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.