

**DEFOREST AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 **Anna Szepieniec** of **DeForest Area High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Szepieniec is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from DeForest Area 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 Szepieniec as Wisconsin'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, Szepieniec 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 6-foot senior won Division 1 state titles in the 100-meter hurdles and long jump this past season, adding a second-place finish in both the 300-meter hurdles and triple jump, leading the Norskies to the team title. Szepieniec also took ninth in the triple jump at New Balance Nationals with a personal-best leap of 39 feet, 4.5 inches, which matched the No. 60 mark nationally among girls prep competitors in 2023. In addition, she clocked personal-best performances of 14.12 seconds in the 100 hurdles and 18 feet, 9.75 inches in the long jump, both of which rank in the top 75 in the country this spring.

A leader in the Norski Mentor program, Szepieniec has also volunteered locally at the DeForest Library and serves as a Sunday school teacher at St. Olaf Church. She has also donated her time as a youth volleyball and track coach. "Anna Szepieniec showcased her versatility and experience on the biggest stage in Wisconsin by winning a pair of individual titles and joining forces with teammate Stacy Kipkoskei to lead DeForest to its first Division 1 team title in program history," said Erik Boal, editor at DyeStat.com. "Szepieniec has accounted for three of the four individual state girls track titles in program history, with Kipkoskei winning the other."

Szepieniec has maintained a 3.65 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on scholarship at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 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.

Szepieniec joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Roisin Willis (2021-22, 2020-21, 2019-20, & 2018-19, Stevens Point Area Senior 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.