

**HINSDALE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 29, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Daniel Watcke** of **Hinsdale Central High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Watcke is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Hinsdale Central 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 Watcke as Illinois' 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, Watcke joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Nico Young (2019-20, Newbury Park High School, Calif.), Michael Norman (2015-16 & 2014-15, Vista Murrieta High School, Calif.), Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas).

The 5-foot-11, 140-pound senior won the 800-meter run at the Class 3A state meet this past season, leading the Red Devils to a fourth place team finish. Competing against professionals in late June, Watcke took 10th in the 800 with a time of 1:47.70, which broke the state record. That mark ranked No. 2 nationally among prep competitors in 2023. Watcke also anchored Hinsdale's 4x800 relay quartet to the title at Nike Outdoor Nationals with a time of 7:29.20, the second-fastest performance in U.S. prep history. In addition, his postseason featured a win in the 800 at the Hoka Festival of Miles and a silver at the Brooks PR Invitational.

Watcke has volunteered locally on behalf of the Ronald McDonald House of DuPage County, Feed My Starving Children, HCS Family Services and Notre Dame Catholic Church. "The Oregon-bound Watcke not only roared to victory at the Class 3A state meet, but he also beat an all-star field at the HOKA Festival of Miles," said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack.com. "Watcke then finished as a close runner-up in what was arguably the strongest 800 field in history at Brooks PR. He also anchored his teammates to the national title at Nike Outdoor Nationals in the second-fastest boys' prep 4x800 relay performance of all time."

Watcke has maintained a weighted 4.69 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Watcke joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Ryan Watts (2021-22, Edwardsville High School), Brandon Battle (2020-21, Edwardsville High School), Josh Methner (2019-20, John Hersey High School), and Marcellus Moore (2018-19, Plainfield North 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.

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