

**VALLEY VIEW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 3, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Slade Caldwell** of **Valley View High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Arkansas Baseball Player of the Year**. Caldwell is the first Gatorade Arkansas Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Valley View High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation's top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Caldwell as Arkansas' best high school baseball player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Gary Sheffield (1985-86, Hillsborough High School, Fla.), Alex Rodriguez (1992-93, Westminster Christian School, Fla.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas) and Max Clark (2022-23, 2021-22 & 2020-21, Franklin Community High School, Ind.).

The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-9, 182-pound senior outfielder and left-handed pitcher led the Blazers to a 26-2 record and the 5A state championship this past season. Caldwell batted .485 with 18 RBI, 58 runs scored and 51 stolen bases, making him the state's career leader with 170 steals. He also compiled a 5-0 record on the mound with a 1.63 ERA, striking out 53 with just seven walks in 34.1 innings of work. He is ranked No. 4 on USA TODAY's list of the nation's Top 10 high school prospects in the 2024 Major League Baseball First Year Player Draft.

A National Honor Society member, Caldwell has volunteered locally on behalf of Special Olympics, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society. He has also donated his time to the Valley View Youth Baseball Camp, offering lessons to young players. "Slade has only gotten better this season," said David Utley, head coach at Nettleton High School. "At the plate, he's almost impossible to get out, and you can't pitch around him. If he gets on, he will be at third in two pitches. Defensively, he has all the tools."

Caldwell has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Mississippi this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in July's Major League Baseball First Year Player 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.

Two-time winner Caldwell joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Baseball Players of the Year Cooper Dossett (2021-22, Har-Ber High School), Jackson Wells (2020-21, Rogers High School) and Cayden Wallace (2019-20, Greenbrier High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$4.9 million in grants to winners across more than 1,900 organizations.

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 X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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