

**THOMAS NELSON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE KENTUCKY BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 27, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Riku Sugie** of **Thomas Nelson High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Sugie is the first Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Thomas Nelson 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 Sugie as Kentucky's best high school boys track & field 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 Alan Webb (2000-01, South Lakes High School, Va.), Kerron Clement (2002-03, Laporte High School, Texas) and Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.).

The 5-foot-10 130-pound junior distance talent broke the state record by winning the national title in the 5000-meter event at Nike Outdoor Nationals this past season, earning All-American honors in the process. Sugie broke the tape in the 5K with a time of 14:28.63 and also set a personal-best in the mile at the event by clocking a 4:11.12. The state's 2023-24 Gatorade Boys Cross Country Player of the Year, he set another state record in the 3200 at the Arcadia Invitational, racing to an 8:48.83 to win the seeded race. At the Class 2A state meet, he swept both the 1600 and 3200 events.

A member of his school's Student Organization Council, Sugie has volunteered locally with Angel Tree, which serves special-needs adults within the community. He has also donated his time to Naturally Bardstown, a local nonprofit entrusted to maintain or revive nature trails at community parks and elementary schools. "It's hard to quibble when a guy wins the national championship, but that's not all Riku Sugie did this spring," said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack. "He also set a state record in the 3200 this spring and captured a pair of state titles. That's an impressive resume."

Sugie has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

Sugie joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Wyatt Stewart (2022-23, Madison Central High School), Cade Flatt (2021-22, Marshall County High School), Mario Paul (2020-21, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School) and Christian Lewis (2019-20, Frederick Douglass 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).