

**TACONIC HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 **Neil Howard III** of **Taconic Hills High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Howard III is the first Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Taconic Hills 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 Howard III as New York’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 6-foot, 165-pound senior decathlete, hurdler and pole vault specialist won the national championship in the decathlon at Nike Outdoor Nationals this past season, recording a personal-best total of 7,448 points, which ranked No. 3 nationally among prep boys competitors this spring and No. 9 in prep history. Howard also took second in the 400-meter hurdles at NON to earn dual All-American honors. He PR’d in that race as well with a time of 51.91 seconds, which ranked No. 4 nationally in 2024. Howard also won the 400 hurdles at the NYSPHSAA State Meet, leading the Titans to a tie for third place in Division 1. He set another PR in the pole vault this spring, clearing 17 feet, 1.25 inches to rank No. 8 nationally.

President of his school’s National Honor Society chapter and a HOBY Youth Leadership ambassador, Howard has volunteered locally packing food bags with nonperishables for homeless families as well as on behalf of the Hillsdale Safe At Home program for senior citizens. He has also donated his time as a youth track and field coach. “One of the best budding decathletes in America hails from the Empire State,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Neil Howard III, already an exceptional talent in certain individual event disciplines, looks like the type to invest the sweat, the patience and the perseverance required to master the 10-event crucible. An exceptional student and driven goal setter, he’s the perfect candidate for the decathlon.”

Howard has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Howard III joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Joseph Perazzo (2022-23, Susan E. Wagner High School), Michael Pinckney (2021-22, High School For Construction Trades, Engineering And Architecture), Emanuel Joseph (2020-21, North Rockland High School) and Brandon Smith (2019-20, South Shore 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).

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