

**ATASCOCITA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 27, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Jelani Watkins** of **Atascocita High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Texas Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Watkins is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Atascocita 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 Watkins as Texas’ 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, 161-pound senior sprinter broke the tape in the 100-meter dash at the UIL Class 6A state meet, clocking a personal-best time of 10.19 seconds, which ranked No. 2 nationally among boys prep competitors and No. 23 in prep history. Watkins PR’d and took gold in the 200 in 20.60—the nation’s No. 5 time in 2024. He also anchored the Eagles 4x100 relay quartet this spring as the group became the first high school foursome to run sub-39 in the event, clocking a national-record time of 38.92 in March to break a 26-year-old mark by close to a second.

A member of his school’s Student Athlete Leadership Council, Watkins has volunteered locally by enlisting the help from teammates to assemble personal hygiene care kits, blankets and hot meals for the homeless community in the Houston area. He also has donated his time mentoring elementary students throughout the school year and at Summerwood Elementary Field Day. “If you’re the top sprinter in Texas, you generally enjoy the same popularity as the state’s top quarterback and that’s the distinction Jelani Watkins earned this spring,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “While he’s the latest in a long line of dash standouts from the Lone Star State, he and his teammates truly earned nationwide appreciation by smashing the national record in the 4x100 relay. That makes you popular across the map.”

Watkins has maintained a 3.12 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Louisiana State University 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.

Watkins joins recent Gatorade Texas Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Karson Gordon (2022-23, Episcopal High School), Pierre Goree (2021-22, Duncanville High School), Bryce Foster (2020-21, Taylor High School) and Devon Achane (2019-20, Marshall 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.