GATEWAY GRIZZLIES
OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE
Contact: Jason Guerette | Phone: (201) 616-9117 | Email: jguerette@gatewaygrizzlies.com

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SAM GARDNER SIGNED BY BLUE JAYS

Gateway closer re-joins affiliated ranks after dominant start to 2026

SAUGET, ILL. – The Gateway Grizzlies are pleased to announce that **Sam Gardner** has been signed by the Toronto Blue Jays, becoming the 55th signing by an MLB organization in club history and the first Grizzlie ever to be signed by multiple major league organizations.

Originally from Shelbyville, Tennessee, Gardner returned to Gateway this offseason after his release from the Milwaukee Brewers organization, where he pitched from 2023-24. This season, he notched three saves in three appearances, striking out the side in all three innings he threw while flashing a mid-90's fastball and devastating curveball combination.

"This was only a matter of time for Sam," Grizzlies manager **Kyle Gaedele** said. "He's been lights-out on the mound for us and an even better teammate in the clubhouse. We're proud of him, and we'll miss him. Guys earning opportunities has been the standard at Gateway, and Sam's signing creates a great chance for our group to step up and prove themselves in expanded roles."

Gardner also began his professional career with the Grizzlies out of Murray State University in 2021 as a starter, then moved to the bullpen in the middle of the 2022 season. It was there that his numbers took off- after finishing 2022 with 97 strikeouts in just 68 2/3 innings (a 12.7 strikeouts-per-nine-innings rate that ranks among the best in club history), he made four more appearances in 2023 before the Brewers came calling.

With Milwaukee, he continued his dominance at Class A-Advanced Wisconsin with a 2.22 ERA and 59 strikeouts in 44 2/3 innings, then the following year at Double-A Biloxi, with a 2.19 ERA alongside 53 strikeouts in 37 innings.

He is the second Gateway pitcher to be signed by Toronto in the last three years, joining Nate Garkow, who is currently with the Blue Jays' Double-A club in New Hampshire.

The Grizzlies return to action tonight in Evansville with a doubleheader beginning at 5:05 p.m. CT. **Blake Peyton** and **Ty Good** will start the twin-bill at Bosse Field.

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The Gateway Grizzlies are a professional baseball team, located a mere 10 minutes from downtown St. Louis in Sauget, Illinois. The Grizzlies offer baseball fans affordable, family fun at Arsenal BG Ballpark with a great view of the St. Louis skyline. They have also won two Frontier League Organization of the Year Awards, four West Division titles, and the 2003 Frontier League Championship. For tickets or general information, please visit gatewaygrizzlies.com or call (618) 337-3000.

The Frontier League debuted in 1993, and is the largest of the Major League Baseball Partner Leagues, featuring teams stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, and from the Ohio River to the St. Lawrence Seaway. More information and the complete 2026 schedule can be found at frontierleague.com.