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**PRAIRIE RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Samson Evans of Prairie Ridge High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Illinois Football Player of the Year. Evans is the first Gatorade Illinois Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Prairie Ridge High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Evans as Illinois' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Evans joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mitchell Trubisky (2012-13, Mentor High School, Ohio), Greg Olsen (2002-03, Wayne Hills High School, N.J.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas), Harrison Smith (2006-07 Knoxville Catholic High School, Tenn.), Latavius Murray (2007-08, Onondaga High School, N.Y.), Brock Osweiler (2008-09, Flathead High School, Mont.) and Leonard Fournette (2014-15 & 2012-13, St. Augustine High School, La.).

The 6-foot-1, 200-pound senior quarterback and return man accounted for 2,915 total yards and 47 touchdowns, leading the Wolves to their second straight 14-0 season and a repeat as Class 6A state champions. The 2017 Chicago Sun-Times Player of the Year and two-time IHSFCA All-State selection, Evans ran for 2,092 yards and 38 touchdowns. He also passed for 610 yards and eight touchdowns in addition to piling up 213 return yards along with a touchdown. A four-time Fox Valley All-Conference member, Evans concluded his prep career ranked seventh on the state's rushing list (6,385 yards) and third in TDs (121).

Evans volunteers as an intramural leader at his school. "Samson's a fantastic football player," said Crystal Lake Central head coach Jon McLaughlin. "He's deceptively fast, deceptively powerful. We couldn't tackle him, and he's been that way the past three years. It's one of those things where you know he's going to get the ball, and yet you know you can't do anything to stop him."

Evans has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Iowa in the fall of 2018.

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 work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Evans joins recent Gatorade Illinois Football Players of the Year Jake Marwede (2016-17, Loyola Academy), Sam Brodner (2015-16, Glenbard West High School), Gabe Green (2014-15, Sacred Heart-Griffin High School), Justin Jackson (2013-14 & 2012-13, Glenbard North High School), Blake Winkler (2011-12, Lincoln-Way East High School), Reilly O'Toole (2010-11, Wheaton Warrenville South High School), and Christian Lombard (2009-10, William Fremd High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Evans will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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