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**EAST CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Tony Brown of East Central High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year. Brown is the first Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year to be chosen from East Central 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 Brown as Mississippi's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Brown 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 5-foot-10, 185-pound senior running back rushed for 2,748 yards and 47 touchdowns this past season, leading the Hornets (13-1) to the Class 4A state championship game. Brown scored 23 touchdowns in five postseason games, despite injuring his shoulder in the second quarter of the state title game. He was the 2016 Class 4A Offensive Player of the Year.

Brown has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through his church youth group. "What separates Tony from the rest is his work ethic," said Eugene Harmon, head coach of Moss Point High. "He gets better with each carry throughout the game. Pound for pound, he is the best running back in the state. East Central does not go undefeated without him."

Brown has maintained a weighted 3.42 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Brown joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Football Players of the Year Cam Akers (2016-17, Clinton High School), Jack Abraham (2015-16, Oxford High School), Darrell Henderson (2014-15, South Panola High School), Devin Voorhies (2013-14, Wilkinson County High School), Ashton Shumpert (2012-13, Itawamba Agricultural High School), Anthony Alford (2011-12 & 2010-11, Petal High School), and Dylan Favre (2009-10, St. Stanislaus College) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Brown 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/>.