

ST. JOSEPH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2018) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Howard Cross of St. Joseph Regional High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade New Jersey Football Player of the Year**. Cross is the third Gatorade New Jersey Football Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph Regional 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 Cross as New Jersey'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, Cross joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas) and Christian McCaffrey (2012-13, 2013-14, Valor Christian High School, Colo.).

The 6-foot-2, 265-pound senior defensive end recorded 76 tackles, 22 tackles for a loss, 9.5 sacks and two fumble recoveries this past season, leading the Green Knights to a 10-2 record and the Non-Public Group 4 championship. Cross had two of his sacks in the 13-0, title-game shutout of Bergen Catholic. An All-State honoree, he was also a First Team All-County and All-League selection.

A student ambassador in his school, Cross has volunteered locally on behalf of a food pantry and youth football programs. "Cross is a terrific football player, extremely versatile," said Bill Fitzgerald, head coach at Seton Hall Prep. "Everything you want in a defensive player, he's got it. He can play on the interior or on the edge. He does a tremendous job in the run game and he's got great pass rush moves."

Cross has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Notre Dame next 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Cross joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Football Players of the Year Devin Leary (2017-18 & 2016-17, Timber Creek Regional High School), Jordan Fuller (2015-16, Northern Valley Regional High School at Old Tappan), Brandon Wimbush (2014-15, Saint Peter's Preparatory School), and Mark Fossati (2013-14, Saint Joseph Regional High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Cross has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.