

## **OREM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE UTAH BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (December 6, 2018) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Puka Nacua of Orem High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Utah Football Player of the Year**. Nacua is the first Gatorade Utah Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Orem 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 Nacua as Utah'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, Nacua 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, 198-pound senior wide receiver caught 103 passes for 2,336 yards and 26 touchdowns this past season, leading the Tigers to a 12-2 record and the Class 4A state championship. Nacua set state single-season records for yards and touchdowns receiving, while also breaking the Utah career marks for yards (5,226), TD catches (58) and receptions (260). A First Team All-State selection and the Utah Valley Player of the Year, he has been chosen to play in the 2019 U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

A tutor for special needs students in his school, Nacua has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and youth sports programs. "Nacua is the best athlete to play in Utah high schools in a long time," said Derek Campbell, head coach at Payson High. "He's got great hands and if the ball is thrown at all near him he just goes up and gets it. He turns short throws into big plays and he regularly makes three or four guys miss after he catches the ball."

Nacua has maintained a 3.34 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Southern California 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.

Nacua joins recent Gatorade Utah Football Players of the Year Cammon Cooper (2017-18, Lehi High School), Joshua Davis (2016-17, Alta High School), Simi Fehoko (2015-16, Brighton High School), Austin Kafentzis (2014-15, Jordan High School), and Scott Nichols (2013-14, Bingham High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Nacua 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).