

BILOXI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 24, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Cameron O'Neal of Biloxi High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year**. O'Neal is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Biloxi 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 track, distinguishes O'Neal as Mississippi's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, O'Neal joins an elite alumni association of state track & field award-winners, including Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa), Allyson Felix (2002-03, Los Angeles Baptist High School, Calif.), Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas), Grant Fisher (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-2, 158-pound junior won the long jump and took fifth in the 200-meter dash at the Class 6A state meet, helping the Indians to a sixth-place finish as a team. His personal-best leap of 24 feet, 3 inches in April ranked as the nation's No. 14 performance among prep long jump competitors this season. A Clarion Ledger All-State selection, O'Neal also set a PR in the triple jump in 2019 (43-0.5), while his fifth-place finish in the 200 at states (22.34 seconds) was a PR as well.

Also a member of the 31-2 Biloxi boys basketball team this past winter, O'Neal has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service projects, including the Loaves and Fishes community center for the needy, Jack and Jill of America and the St. Therese Catholic Church. He's also donated his time to the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program, the Salvation Army Angel Tree initiative and by working at The Prospect Lab, a speed clinic for underprivileged youth. In addition, he's served as a math and reading tutor for elementary school students. "Cameron O'Neal went from an average long-jumper to a 24-foot guy in two years," said James Matthews, MileSplit's Mississippi Editor. "He set PRs in three events this year as a junior and most of the SEC schools are already looking at him."

O'Neal has maintained a weighted 3.42 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school this 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.

O'Neal joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Cameron Crump (2017-18 & 2016-17, Strayhorn High School), DeMichael Harris (2015-16 & 2014-15, St. Aloysius High School) and Terrell Smith (2013-14, Vicksburg High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," O'Neal also 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.

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