

HILLSBORO-CENTRAL VALLEY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2019) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Oscar Benson of Hillsboro-Central Valley** as its **2019-20 Gatorade North Dakota Football Player of the Year**. Benson is the first Gatorade North Dakota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Hillsboro-Central Valley.

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 Benson as North Dakota'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, Benson joins an elite group of past state football award-winners, 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-1, 195-pound senior running back and linebacker rushed for 1,361 yards and 17 touchdowns on 179 carries this past season, leading the Burros (12-0) to the Class AA state championship. Benson also recorded 51 tackles, 12 tackles for loss and five pass breakups. The Class AA Football Senior of the Year, he is a two-time First Team All-State selection.

President of his school's chapter of the National Honor Society, Benson has volunteered locally on behalf of his church's youth group. "Oscar Benson was the most dominant player in the state this year," said Tommy Butler, head coach at Central Cass High. "On defense, he consistently beats one-on-one blocks. On offense, he can make cuts that no one else on the field can do, and when he gets into the open field, no one is going to catch him."

Benson has maintained a 3.99 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at North Dakota State University 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 and 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.

Benson joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Football Players of the Year Will Madler (2018-19, Bismarck High School), Andy Gravdahl (2017-18, West Fargo High School), Brandon Metz (2016-17, West Fargo High School), Dalton Feeney (2015-16, Century High School) and James Johannesson (2014-15, Fargo South High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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