

## **ST. FRANCES ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MARYLAND FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 5, 2025) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Jireh Edwards of St. Frances Academy is the 2025-26 Gatorade Maryland Football Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their excellence in sport, academics and community. The award recognizes Edwards as Maryland's best high school football player, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, LA), Nick Singleton (2021-22, Governor Mifflin High School, PA) and Keelon Russell (2024-25, Duncanville High School, TX).

The 6-foot-2, 215-pound senior safety led the Panthers to an 8-1 record and the No. 2 ranking in the MaxPreps National Top 25 this past season. Edwards amassed 167 tackles and recorded six interceptions, returning two for touchdowns, as he anchored a defense that allowed just 8.4 points per game. He is ranked as the nation's No. 23 recruit in the Class of 2026 by ESPN.com.

Edwards has volunteered locally as a youth football coach. "Jireh is a stud—a big, physical safety with a college body right now, tough and active, loves to hit," said Greg Biggins, 247 Sports national recruiting analyst. "He could even play some linebacker in college in some schemes, so you love the flexibility."

Edwards has maintained a B average in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he had made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at the University of Alabama next fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one state winner from each of the 50 states and Washington D.C., in 12 different sports: football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls track & field. In total, 610 high school athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the winners in each sport.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$6.4 million in grants to winners across more than 2,200 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](https://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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