

JACKSON ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 5, 2025) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced TJ White of Jackson Academy is the 2025-26 Gatorade Mississippi 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 White as Mississippi'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, 230-pound senior linebacker led the Raiders to an 11-1 record and the Midsouth Association of Independent Schools Class 6A tournament championship this past season. White recorded 88 tackles, including 22 for a loss and 12 sacks. A First Team All-State selection, he will participate in the 2026 U.S. Navy All-American Bowl.

White has volunteered locally with Jackson Academy's Alpha/Omega program, which pairs a senior with a kindergarten student. He has also donated his time as a Football Buddy to area youth. "TJ has great physical traits; he is long, he is fast and he has the best three-step acceleration into a tackle that I've seen," said David Duggan, head coach of Jackson Academy. "He can rush the passer, he can drop into coverage and he can play man-to-man. Combine that with a high football IQ and all of those skills will translate at the next level."

White 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 Tennessee 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 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.

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