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Contact: John Manzo (586-713-9347)

**GATORADE® NATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR:
JT DANIELS**

Houston Texans Quarterback Surprises Standout with Elite Honor

Santa Ana, Calif. (December 19, 2017) - In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced JT Daniels of Mater Dei High School (Santa Ana, Calif.) as its 2017-18 Gatorade National Football Player of the Year. Daniels was surprised with the news by Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson.

Check out the surprise video [here](#).

"JT really deserves to be this year's Gatorade National Football Player of the Year because he represents everything the award stands for," said Watson. "Not only has JT excelled on the field, but he's also a good student and a positive role model in the community. I'm excited to follow his career and watch all the things he will accomplish in the future."

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 Daniels as the nation's best high school football player. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select JT from nearly 1 million high school football players nationwide. Daniels is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Male High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-1, 205-pound junior quarterback had led the Monarchs to a 15-0 record and the CIF state championship. Ranked as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2019 by Rivals.com, Daniels completed 242-of-335 passes for 3,890 yards and 49 touchdowns against just four interceptions through 14 games. He also rushed for 513 yards and seven scores on 57 carries. Entering the final game of his junior year, Daniels has passed for 11,781 yards and 149 touchdowns in his prep football career.

Daniels has maintained a weighted 4.18 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered as part of Mater Dei's Monarchs for Marines program supporting the troops and families of the First Marine Division stationed at nearby Camp Pendleton. He has also donated his time locally delivering care backpacks to the homeless and as a youth football coach.

"JT Daniels is definitely the real deal," said Greg Biggins, National Recruiting Analyst for 247Sports. "He's an elite player. A leader. One of the best quarterbacks I've ever seen. He's also a great character kid off the field. He's a great choice by Gatorade."

He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Southern California in the fall of 2019.

"Without question, JT is deserving of recognition as the nation's best high school football player based on his statistics on the field and the impact his accomplishments have had on Mater Dei's success," said Gatorade Senior Vice President and General Manager Brett O'Brien. "But he is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young athletes of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. He represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient."

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Daniels 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 win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for his organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

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. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high sports leadership team in partnership with the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- 2015 NBA first overall pick Karl-Anthony Towns
- Three-time WNBA champion Maya Moore
- Four-time track & field gold medalist Allyson Felix
- Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at PlayeroftheYear.Gatorade.com on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

YEAR	NAME	HIGH SCHOOL	STATUS
2017-18	JT Daniels	Mater Dei, Santa Ana, CA	High School Junior
2016-17	Tate Martell	Bishop Gorman High School	Ohio State University
2015-16	Jacob Eason	Lake Stevens HS, Lake Stevens, WA	University of Georgia
2014-15	Kyler Murray	Allen HS, Allen, TX	University of Oklahoma
2013-14	Andrew Brown	Oscar Smith, Chesapeake, VA	University of Virginia
2012-13	Max Browne	Skyline HS, Sammamish, WA	University of Pittsburgh
2011-12	Johnathan Gray	Aledo, Aledo, TX	NFL Free Agent
2010-11	Justin Worley	Northwestern, Rock Hill, SC	NFL Free Agent
2009-10	Malcolm Jones	Oaks Christian, Westlake Village, CA	NFL Free Agent
2008-09	Garrett Gilbert	Lake Travis, Austin, TX	NFL Free Agent
2007-08	Matt Barkley	Mater Dei, Santa Ana, CA	Arizona Cardinals
2006-07	John Brantley	Trinity Catholic, Ocala, FL	NFL Free Agent
2005-06	Mitch Mustain	Springdale, Springdale, AR	AFL/NFL Free Agent
2004-05	Greg Paulus	Christian Brothers Academy, Syracuse, NY	Louisville Cardinals Staff
2003-04	Jeff Byers	Loveland, Loveland, CO	Retired from NFL
2002-03	Kyle Wright	Monte Vista, Danville, CA	NFL Free Agent
2001-02	Lorenzo Booker	St. Bonaventure, Ventura, CA	NFL Free Agent
2000-01	Joe Mauer	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	Minnesota Twins
1999-00	Brock Berlin	Evangel Christian Academy, Shreveport, LA	Retired from NFL
1998-99	Chris Lewis	Long Beach Polytechnic, Long Beach, CA	Retired from NFL Europe
1997-98	Ronald Curry	Hampton, Hampton, VA	New Orleans Saints Staff
1996-97	Travis Minor	Catholic, Baton Rouge, LA	Retired from NFL
1995-96	Tim Couch	Leslie County High, Hyden, KY	Retired from NFL
1994-95	Brock Huard	Puyallup, Puyallup, WA	Retired from NFL
1993-94	Peyton Manning	Isidore Newman, New Orleans, LA	Retired from NFL
1992-93	Ron Powllus	Berwick, Berwick, PA	Univ. of Notre Dame Staff
1991-92	Chris Walsh	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	Retired from NFL
1990-91	Marquette Smith	Winter Park, Lake Howell, FL	Retired from NFL
1989-90	Robert Smith	Euclid, Euclid, OH	Retired from NFL
1988-89	Terry Kirby	Tabb, Tabb, VA	Retired from NFL
1987-88	Curtis Bray	Gateway Senior, Monroeville, PA	Deceased
1986-87	Emmitt Smith	Escambia, Pensacola, FL	Retired from NFL
1985-86	Jeff George	Warren Central, Indianapolis, IN	Retired from NFL

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