

ARCHBISHOP MOELLER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2024) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Matt Ponatoski of Archbishop Moeller High School is the 2024-25 Gatorade Ohio Football Player of the Year. Ponatoski is the third Gatorade Ohio Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Archbishop Moeller High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Ponatoski as Ohio’s best high school football player, and he joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fl.), Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, La.) and DJ Lagway (2023-24, Willis High School, Texas).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot-1, 195-pound junior quarterback had led the Crusaders to a 14-1 record and a berth in the Division I state championship game. Ponatoski passed for 4,085 yards and 56 touchdowns against just three interceptions in 15 games, including 12 games with at least three TD tosses. A two-time Greater Catholic League First-Team honoree, he is also a nationally ranked shortstop for the Moeller baseball team.

A tour guide for prospective students at his school, Ponatoski has volunteered locally as a Victory Day Counselor, working with children with special needs. He has also donated his time as a youth baseball hitting coach and as a youth football referee. “Matt is a great player and drives their offense,” said Pat McLaughlin, head coach of La Salle High School. “He can make all the throws and is the difference-maker for their team. They are not the same team without him.”

Ponatoski has maintained a weighted 4.21 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 across 12 different high school sports – 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Ponatoski joins recent Gatorade Ohio Football Players of the Year Marquise Davis (2023-24, Cleveland Heights High School), Jordan Marshall (2022-23, Archbishop Moeller High School), Gabe Powers (2021-22, Marysville High School) and Corey Kiner (2020-21, Roger Bacon High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

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 \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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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