

NOTRE DAME PREP STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARIZONA BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2018) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Jake Smith of Notre Dame Prep** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Arizona Football Player of the Year**. Smith is the first Gatorade Arizona Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Notre Dame Prep.

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 Smith as Arizona'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, Smith joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park HS, Texas) and Christian McCaffrey (2012-13, 2013-14, Valor Christian High School, Colo.).

The 6-foot-1, 195-pound senior running back and wide receiver caught 64 passes for 1,112 yards and 22 touchdowns this past season, leading the Saints (13-1) to the Conference 5A state championship game. An Under Armour All-American Bowl selection, Smith also rushed for 741 yards and 15 TDs, returning two kickoffs for scores as well. He recorded 20 tackles from the defensive secondary, including 4.5 sacks, and averaged 38.7 yards per punt. He concluded his prep football career with 5,446 total yards and 72 touchdowns.

Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Catholic Church, St. Mary's Food Bank Community Kitchen, Feed My Starving Children and the Miracle League of Arizona. "Jake Smith has had an amazing year and is an explosive player," said Mike Hudnutt, head coach of Cactus Shadows High. "He has the ability to turn nothing into something big. He is a playmaker."

Smith has maintained a weighted 3.33 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at the University of Texas in the fall of 2019.

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. 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Arizona Football Players of the Year Brock Purdy (2017-18, Perry High School), Draycen Hall (2016-17, Higley High School), Daniel Bridge-Gadd (2015-16, Paradise Valley High School), Christian Kirk (2014-15, Saguaro High School), and Luke Rubenzer (2013-14, Saguaro High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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