

MORRILTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2019) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Jacolby Criswell of Morrilton High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year**. Criswell is the first Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Morrilton High School.

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 Criswell as Arkansas' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Criswell joins an elite group of past state football award-winners, including Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas) and Christian McCaffrey (2012-13, 2013-14, Valor Christian High School, Colo.).

The 6-foot-1, 205-pound senior quarterback passed for 2,869 yards and 27 touchdowns this past season, leading the Devil Dogs (8-5) to the Class 5A semifinals. Criswell completed 206 of 316 passes with just five interceptions, while also rushing for 1,282 yards and 24 touchdowns on 171 carries. An Elite 11 quarterback competition national finalist, he is also an All-Conference and All-State selection and a finalist for the Landers Award.

A devoted member of his church community, Criswell has volunteered locally on behalf of an elementary school reading initiative and youth football programs. "Jacolby Criswell has by far the best arm I've ever seen on a quarterback in high school," said Mark Kelley, head coach at Searcy High. "Not only does he have the arm, but his size and the way he moves makes him extremely difficult to bring down when he runs the football. He's a really special football player."

Criswell has maintained a 3.29 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of North Carolina next fall.

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 and 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.

Criswell joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Football Players of the Year Justice Hill (2018-19, Little Rock Christian Academy), Layne Hatcher (2017-18, Pulaski Academy), Taylor Powell (2016-17, Fayetteville High School), McTelvin Agim (2015-16, Hope High School) and Ty Storey (2014-15, Charleston High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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