

**ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 **Derek Wingo of St. Thomas Aquinas High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Florida Football Player of the Year**. Wingo is the second Gatorade Florida Football Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Thomas Aquinas 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 Wingo as Florida'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, Wingo 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.).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot-2, 215-pound senior linebacker and defensive end had led the Raiders to a 13-0 record, a berth in the Class 7A state championship game and a No. 2 national ranking in the USA TODAY Super 25. Wingo recorded 54 tackles, 17 tackles for loss, 14 sacks and two forced fumbles through 13 games, pacing a defense that allowed just 8.3 points per game and notched seven shutouts. An All-County and All-State honoree, he was a semifinalist for the Butkus Award and has been selected to play in the 2020 All-American Bowl.

Wingo has volunteered locally on behalf of youth football programs. "Wingo is one of those few players who, when you turn on the film, you think 'we can't stop this guy,'" said Bobby Ramsay, head coach at Mandarin High School. "He plays extremely hard, he's very versatile and he's a great finisher. He's an excellent football player."

Wingo has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Florida 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.

Wingo joins recent Gatorade Florida Football Players of the Year Marcus Crowley (2018-19, Trinity Christian Academy), Lorenzo Lingard (2017-18, University High School), Shaun Wade (2016-17, Trinity Christian Academy), Tyler Huntley (2015-16, Hallandale High School) and Jacques Patrick (2014-15, Timber Creek High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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