

TOPEKA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Ky Thomas of Topeka High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year**. Thomas is the second Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Topeka 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 Thomas as Kansas' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Thomas 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, 205-pound senior running back rushed for 3,027 yards and 35 touchdowns this past season, leading the Trojans (10-2) to the Class 6A state semifinals. Thomas ran for more than 200 yards nine times, including two 300-yard games, both in the postseason. A three-time First Team All-State selection, he concluded his prep football career with 7,054 rushing yards and 93 touchdowns.

Thomas has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank in addition to donating his time to community beautification projects and as a youth football coach. "Ky is an unbelievable player," said Corby Milleon, head coach of Emporia High School. "He is absolutely the best player I have coached against. He is the reason for the Trojans' success."

Thomas has maintained a weighted 3.12 GPA in the classroom. Taking advantage of NCAA early signing rules, Thomas has inked a financial-aid agreement that will pave the way for him to enroll at the University of Minnesota. He will graduate from high school later this month and attend classes in the spring semester.

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.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade Kansas Football Players of the Year Graham Mertz (2018-19, Blue Valley North High School), Carter Putz (2017-18 and 2016-17, Bishop Miege High School), Christian Jegen (2015-16, Mill Valley High School) and Denzel Goolsby (2014-15, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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