

**MESQUITE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 13, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Ty Thompson of Mesquite High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Arizona Football Player of the Year. Thompson is the first Gatorade Arizona Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Mesquite 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 Thompson 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 May, Thompson 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-4, 220-pound senior quarterback led the Wildcats to an 9-1 record and a second straight Class 4A state championship this past season. Thompson passed for 3,431 yards and 34 touchdowns, also rushing for 410 yards and eight scores. He threw three TD passes and rushed for two more in the Wildcats' 39-38 win over Cactus High in the state title game. Ranked as the nation's No. 67 recruit in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.com, Thompson was named the All-American Bowl's 2020 National Offensive Player of the Year. He concluded his prep football career with 9,891 passing yards and 100 touchdowns.

Thompson has volunteered locally as a math tutor and as a motivational speaker for peers. He has also donated his time as part of multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Ty gave our defense a lot of issues with his size, speed, smarts and ability," said Anthony Figueroa, head coach of Marcos de Niza High School. "He gets the ball out of his hands quickly and can make any throw. He is a special talent."

Thompson has maintained a weighted 4.28 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of Oregon this 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 & 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Thompson joins recent Gatorade Arizona Football Players of the Year Bijan Robinson (2019-20, Salpointe Catholic High School), Jake Smith (2018-19, Notre Dame Preparatory High School), Brock Purdy (2017-18, Perry High School), and Draycen Hall (2016-17, Higley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Thompson has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Thompson is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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