

**LOS ALAMITOS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CALIFORNIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 13, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Malachi Nelson of Los Alamitos High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade California Football Player of the Year. Nelson is the second Gatorade California Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Los Alamitos 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 Nelson as California'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, Nelson 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-3, 180-pound sophomore quarterback led the Griffins to a 6-0 record this past season. Nelson passed for 1,513 yards and 23 touchdowns, completing 73.9% of his throws and averaging an astounding 13.2 yards per attempt. He threw for 376 yards and a school-record seven touchdowns in one half against Huntington Beach High. A 2020 MaxPreps Sophomore All-American, Nelson was the Golden Gun Accuracy Challenge winner at the Elite 11 Los Angeles Regional last June. He is ranked as the nation's No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2023 by Rivals.com.

Nelson has volunteered locally as a youth football coach. "Malachi blew us away with his growth from last year," said Dan O'Shea, head coach of Corona del Mar High School. "I figured we could rattle him or their offense, but he never blinked and literally did not have one ball off target to his wide receivers all night."

Nelson has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade California Football Players of the Year Bryce Young (2019-20, Mater Dei High School), DJ Uiagalelei (2018-19, St. John Bosco High School), and J.T. Daniels (2017-18 & 2016-17, Mater Dei High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Nelson has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Nelson 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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