

**SMYRNA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE DELAWARE 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 Aidan Sanchez of Smyrna High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Delaware Football Player of the Year. Sanchez is the third Gatorade Delaware Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Smyrna 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 Sanchez as Delaware'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, Sanchez 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 senior quarterback passed for 2,243 yards and 25 touchdowns this past season, leading the Eagles (6-1) to the state semifinals. Sanchez completed 154 of 220 passes, throwing just four interceptions. A First Team All-State selection, he was also a two-time First Team All-Conference honoree.

Sanchez has served as a mentor for younger students and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics. "Aidan Sanchez is a tremendous football player," said Rudy Simonetti, head coach at Dover High School. "He's a tough young man who displayed tremendous pocket awareness, arm strength and accuracy. He's got that 'it' factor that coaches look for in a quarterback."

Sanchez has maintained a 3.40 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at Kutztown University (Pa.) 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.

Sanchez joins recent Gatorade Delaware Football Players of the Year C.J. Henry (2019-20, Hodgson Vo-Tech), Javon Peace (2018-19, Dover High School), Will Knight (2017-18, Smyrna High School), and Nolan Henderson (2016-17, Smyrna High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Sanchez has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Sanchez 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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