

**DERBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 Lem Wash of Derby High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year. Wash is the first Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Derby 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 Wash as Kansas'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, Wash 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 quarterback led the Panthers to a 9-2 record and a third straight Class 6A state championship this past season. Wash passed for 1,313 yards and 18 touchdowns, also rushing for 1,292 yards and 20 scores. A First-Team All-State selection, he amassed 349 yards of total offense and seven TDs in Derby's 56-31 win over Blue Valley North High in the state final.

Wash has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through his school and church. "Lem was a special player this year," said Brent Pfeifer, head coach of Maize South High. "He is a relentless worker and his speed, strength and composure make him a threat on every down."

Wash has maintained a 3.40 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at Tennessee Tech University 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.

Wash joins recent Gatorade Kansas Football Players of the Year Ky Thomas (2019-20, Topeka High School), Graham Mertz (2018-19, Blue Valley North High School), and Carter Putz (2017-18 & 2016-17, Bishop Miege High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###