

**CLASSICAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 Sam Baddoo of Classical High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Rhode Island Football Player of the Year. Baddoo is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Classical 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 Baddoo as Rhode Island'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, Baddoo 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 5-foot-10, 185-pound senior running back and defensive back rushed for 1,000 yards and 15 touchdowns this past season, leading the Purple (4-2) to the Division III state semifinals. Baddoo averaged 11.4 yards per carry, caught 12 passes for 168 yards and six TDs and returned both a kickoff and an interception for scores. He is a two-time First Team All-State selection.

Baddoo has volunteered locally with Beat the Streets Providence, and he has also donated his time as a youth football coach. "Sam is the key guy in all three phases for Classical," said Nick Russo, head coach of Chariho High. "What makes Sam a special talent is you can have everything in place from a schematics standpoint and he still beats you."

Baddoo has maintained a weighted A-minus average in the classroom. He will attend Brown University, where he will play football, beginning 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.

Baddoo joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Football Players of the Year James Osmanski (2019-20, North Kingstown High School), Dylan Poirier (2018-19, North Kingstown High School), Will Such (2017-18, Cranston High School West), and Kwity Paye (2016-17, Bishop Hendricken High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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