

**BRANDON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Tate Johnson of Brandon Valley High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year. Johnson is the fourth Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Brandon Valley 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 Johnson as South Dakota'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, Johnson 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, 175-pound senior running back rushed for 1,956 yards and 27 touchdowns on 245 carries this past season, leading the Lynx (9-1) to the Class 11AAA state championship. Johnson also caught eight passes for 121 yards and a touchdown. A two-time First Team All-State and All-Conference honoree, he was named captain of the Argus Leader Elite 45 team.

Johnson has donated his time raising funds to benefit Children's Miracle Network. "He's a well-rounded running back who would shine in any kind of offense," said Jared Fredenburg, head coach at Lincoln High. "He's a very powerful, but nimble, downhill-style back who never seems to take a square hit. He can squeeze through the smallest of holes and always seems to fall forward."

Johnson has maintained a 3.64 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at Augustana 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.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Football Players of the Year Garrett Stout (2019-20, T.F. Riggs High School), Canyon Bauer (2018-19, O'Gorman High School), Seth Benson (2017-18, Washington High School), and Spencer Neugebauer (2016-17, Mitchell High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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