

**DAMIEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CALIFORNIA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 30, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Malik Thomas of Damien High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade California Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Thomas is the first Gatorade California Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Damien 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 Thomas as California's best high school boys basketball player. Thomas joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jayson Tatum (2015-16, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Mo.), Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Jabari Parker (2011-12, Simeon Career Academy, Ill.) and Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.).

The 6-foot-4, 205-pound senior guard led the Spartans to a 29-4 record and the semifinals of the Southern California Open Division tournament this past season. Thomas averaged 22.6 points, 5.6 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.9 steals per game. The Baseline League MVP, he is a four-time All-League selection and was the state Junior of the Year in 2020, as well as the Freshman of the Year in 2018.

A devoted member of his church community, Thomas has served meals to the homeless and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth basketball programs as well as his school's recycling club. "Malik Thomas is one of the better scoring guards on the West Coast," said Paul Biancardi, ESPN National Recruiting Director. "He brings a strong body and scoring package to USC next season and demonstrates a blend of finishing his drives, rebounding and a capable outside shot. He also displays a level of toughness and can be an effective defender with commitment."

Thomas has maintained a 3.10 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Southern California 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.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade California Boys Basketball Players of the Year Evan Mobley (2019-20 & 2018-19, Rancho Christian School), David Singleton (2017-18, Bishop Montgomery High School), and Marvin Bagley (2016-17, Sierra Canyon School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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