

**EAST ANCHORAGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALASKA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 7, 2021) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Kyler Johnson of East Anchorage High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Alaska Football Player of the Year**. Johnson is the third Gatorade Alaska Football Player of the Year to be chosen from East Anchorage 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 Alaska's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Johnson joins an elite alumni association of state 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, 180-pound senior quarterback and defensive back led the Thunderbirds to a 10-1 record and the Division I state championship this past season. Johnson passed for 2,103 yards and 25 touchdowns while also rushing for 10 scores. He was the State Championship Player of the Game after passing for 134 yards and rushing for two TDs in East's 30-17 win over Juneau-Douglas/Thunder Mountain.

Johnson has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach and referee, and he has donated his time distributing food to families in need. "We tremendously underestimated how athletic Kyler was as he exploited us in every way imaginable," said Walt Harmon, head coach of South High School. "He was truly special."

Johnson has maintained a B average in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade Alaska Football Players of the Year Jordan Holland (2020-21, East Anchorage High School), Jace Henry (2019-20, Lathrop High School), Colton Herman (2018-19, East Anchorage High School), and Derryk Snell (2017-18, Chugiak High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Johnson has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Johnson is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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