

**DERBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Dylan Edwards of Derby High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year**. Edwards is the second 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 Edwards as Kansas' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Edwards 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 5-foot-9, 165-pound junior running back rushed for 2,603 yards and 38 touchdowns, averaging 12.5 yards per carry, this past season, leading the Panthers (11-1) to the Class 6A state championship game. Edwards also caught eight passes for 101 yards and a TD, and he returned two punts and a kickoff for scores.

Edwards received the Derby Public Schools "I Make a Difference" award for his dedication to community service. He has volunteered locally as an elementary school mentor and as a youth football coach. "Dylan Edwards is the best player I've seen in person at the high school level," said Mike Vernon, head coach of Hutchinson High School. "He's very dangerous. I can't wait for him to graduate."

Edwards has maintained a 3.30 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school next 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Edwards joins recent Gatorade Kansas Football Players of the Year Lem Wash (2020-21, Derby High School), Ky Thomas (2019-20, Topeka High School), Graham Mertz (2018-19, Blue Valley North High School), and Carter Putz (2017-18, Bishop Miege 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, Edwards 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. Edwards 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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