

**SARALAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 6, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ryan Williams** of **Saraland High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year**. Williams is the first Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Saraland 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 Williams as Alabama's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Williams joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Trevor Lawrence (2018-19 & 2016-17, Cartersville High School, Ga.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas) and Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.).

The 6-foot-1, 165-pound sophomore wide receiver led the Spartans to a 14-1 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Williams caught 87 passes for 1,641 yards and 24 touchdowns, including seven games with multiple TD receptions. He also rushed for 709 yards and 15 scores and returned two punts for touchdowns. In Saraland High School's 38-17 win over Mountain Brook High in the state final, Williams amassed 272 all-purpose yards and four TDs. He is ranked as the nation's No. 25 recruit in the Class of 2025 by 247Sports.com.

A member of the Saraland High student council, Williams has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit his school. He has also donated his time with the Special Olympics and as a youth football coach. "Ryan is the reason Saraland is as good as they are," said Ham Barnett, head coach of St. Paul's Episcopal High. "He is explosive with the ball in his hands. He makes the team better with or without the ball in his hands because as a coach, you attempt to stop their best player."

Williams has maintained a weighted 3.24 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play football on scholarship at the University of Alabama beginning in the fall of 2025.

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.

Williams joins recent Gatorade Alabama Football Players of the Year Earl Woods (2021-22, Hueytown High School), Conner Harrell (2020-21, Thompson High School), Kristian Story (2019-20, Lanett High School), and Bo Nix (2018-19, Pinson Valley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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