

**MAIZE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE KANSAS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 6, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Avery Johnson** of **Maize High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year**. Johnson is the first Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Maize 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 Kansas' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Johnson 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-3, 176-pound senior quarterback passed for 28 touchdowns and rushed for 17 scores this past season, leading the Eagles (12-1) to the Class 5A state championship game. A two-time Class 5A First Team All-State selection, Johnson threw for 2,748 yards and rushed for 817 yards on 98 carries, good for 8.3 yards per attempt. Ranked as the nation's No. 76 recruit in the Class of 2023 by 247Sports.com, he was a finalist for MaxPreps.com National Player of the Year.

Johnson has volunteered locally creating Joy Jars for kids fighting cancer, and he has donated his time as a youth football coach and youth mentor. "Avery Johnson is a very polished athlete and was in total control of everything when we played Maize," said Carlos Kelly, head coach of Topeka High School.

Johnson has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he'd made a verbal commitment to play football on scholarship at Kansas State 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 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 Kansas Football Players of the Year Dylan Edwards (2021-22, Derby High School), Lem Wash (2020-21, Derby High School), Ky Thomas (2019-20, Topeka High School), and Graham Mertz (2018-19, Blue Valley North 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade)

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