

**SPRINGFIELD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 **William Watson** of **Springfield Central High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year**. Watson is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Springfield Central 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 Watson as Massachusetts' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Watson 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, 182-pound senior quarterback led the Golden Eagles (10-2) to a Division I state championship appearance, compiling 3,226 yards and 39 touchdowns as a dual-threat signal caller. A three-star recruit, Watson completed 63 percent of his passes for 2,338 yards and 17 touchdowns, adding 928 yards and 22 touchdowns on the ground. He was also named to the 2023 U.S. Army All-American Bowl roster.

Watson has volunteered locally in the community by being a face of Springfield's 'Vax The Field' in an effort to help city residents get their Covid-19 vaccination and also with the Springfield Central High School Youth Football program as a coach. "Pop Watson is an absolute nightmare to defend," said Minnechaug High School head coach Will Nickerson. "He's the ultimate competitor and leader. He has the combination of arm strength, breakaway speed, power, agility and vision that is unmatched in Massachusetts at the quarterback position."

Watson has maintained a 3.62 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he'd made a verbal commitment to play football on scholarship at Virginia Tech 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.

Watson joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Football Players of the Year Ayden Pereira (2021-22, Central Catholic High School), Owen McGowan (2020-21, Catholic Memorial High School), Kalel Mullings (2019-20, Milton Academy), and Mike Sainristil (2018-19, Everett 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.

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