

**ITAWAMBA AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Isaac Smith** of **Itawamba Agricultural High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Itawamba Agricultural 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 Smith as Mississippi'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, Smith 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-2, 210-pound senior running back and safety rushed for 913 yards and 17 touchdowns this past season, leading the Indians (12-1) to the Class 4A state quarterfinals. Smith also caught 46 passes for 742 yards and four TDs in addition to throwing for two scores. On defense, Smith recorded 76 tackles, 10 interceptions—returning two for touchdowns—and also brought back a fumble for a score. Ranked as the nation's No. 120 recruit in the Class of 2023 by Rivals.com, he was the Class 4A State Player of the Year.

A member of the Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society, Smith has volunteered locally with the Salvation Army and as a youth football coach. "Isaac has been a constant in our program since he was a freshman," said Clint Hoots, head coach of Itawamba Agricultural High School. "His play on the field is spectacular, but his off-the-field, daily actions are even more impressive. He does all the little things that are required to be an elite player."

Smith has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he remained 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Football Players of the Year D.J. Smith, Jr. (2021-22, Greenville Christian School), Ty Keyes (2020-21 & 2019-20, Taylorsville High School), and Nakobe Dean (2018-19, Horn Lake 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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