

**KAPAUN MOUNT CARMEL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 3, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Omari Elias** of **Kapaun Mount Carmel Catholic High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year**. Elias is the first Gatorade Kansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Kapaun Mount Carmel Catholic High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Elias as Kansas’ best high school football player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, La.) and Jackson Arnold (2022-23, John H. Guyer High School, Texas).

The 5-foot-8, 205-pound senior running back rushed for 3,109 yards and 40 touchdowns this past season, leading the Crusaders (11-2) to the Class 5A state championship game. A 2022 Class 5A First Team All-State selection, Elias scored 19 touchdowns in five postseason games, and rushed for 280 yards and three scores in Kapaun’s 62-37 loss to Mill Valley High in the state final.

The vice president of the Kapaun National Honor Society, Elias has volunteered locally as a peer tutor and with his school’s Peer Ministry program. He has also donated his time as a youth football and wrestling coach. “Kapaun was tremendously effective on offense against every team they played and Omari is the reason why,” said Dusty Trail, head coach of Bishop Carroll High School. “Their offense goes because of him. He is so tough to tackle that so much of a defense’s time and energy is spent trying to get him to the ground.”

Elias has maintained a weighted 4.01 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to attend the United States Air Force Academy, where he will play football, beginning 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.

Elias joins recent Gatorade Kansas Football Players of the Year Avery Johnson (2022-23, Maize High School), Dylan Edwards (2021-22, Derby High School), Lem Wash (2020-21, Derby High School), and Ky Thomas (2019-20, Topeka High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

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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