

**WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 3, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **DJ Lagway** of **Willis High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Texas Football Player of the Year**. Lagway is the first Gatorade Texas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Willis 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 Lagway as Texas’ best high school football player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Lagway joins 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 6-foot-3, 230-pound senior quarterback passed for 4,604 yards and a 6A state record 58 touchdowns this past season, leading the Wildkats to a 12-1 record, their first district title since 2002 and a trip to the 6A-Division II regional final. Lagway completed 72.1 percent of his passes and averaged 354.2 yards per game. He also led the team in rushing yards (957) and touchdowns (16) and was named District 13-6A Player of the Year, having led Willis to the first 10-win season in program history.

Lagway has volunteered locally at eldercare facilities, playing games and creating arts and crafts with the residents. He also has donated his time to a community foodbank and as a public speaker at schools and churches in the area, speaking with younger students about what it takes to succeed in school as well as athletics. “DJ Lagway is the best QB I’ve ever coached against” said Conroe High School head coach Cedric Hardeman. “He has a quick release, which allows him to fit balls in windows most high school kids can’t, he can run and he’s done a great job of growing as a leader. I have a lot of respect for the kid.”

Lagway has maintained a 3.48 GPA in the classroom. Taking advantage of NCAA early signing rules, Lagway inked a financial-aid agreement that paved the way for him to enroll at the University of Florida, where he will play football next fall. He graduated from high school in December and will attend classes in the spring semester.

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.

Lagway joins recent Gatorade Texas Football Players of the Year Jackson Arnold (2022-23, Guyer High School), Cade Klubnik (2021-22, Westlake High School), Sawyer Robertson (2020-21, Coronado High School), and Jaxon Smith-Njigba (2019-20, Rockwall 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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