

**THORNTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 21, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Morez Johnson** of **Thornton Township High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Illinois Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Johnson is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Thornton Township High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the court, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Johnson as Illinois’ best high school boys basketball 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 LeBron James (2002-03 & 2001-02, St. Vincent – St. Mary High School, Ohio), Karl-Anthony Towns (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Joseph High School, N.J.) and Jayson Tatum (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Mo.).

The 6-foot-9, 235-pound senior power forward averaged 17.2 points and 14.1 rebounds per game this past season, leading the Wildcats (29-5) to the Class 3A Super-Sectional round of the state tournament. Johnson also averaged 3.5 assists, 3.4 blocks and 2.6 steals per game. A transfer from St. Rita High in Chicago, he is a 2024 Nike Hoop Summit Team USA member and is ranked as the nation’s No. 29 recruit in the Class of 2024 by Rivals.

Johnson has volunteered locally with Hands Across Harvey, a service event to demonstrate resilience against violence, adversity and rivalry. He has also donated his time as part of community beautification projects. “Morez is a beast,” said Dante Maddox, head coach of Bloom High. “He is big, strong and athletic. He leads the Wildcats verbally and with his actions. His impact is real. He was the most dominant and hardest player in the state to stop.”

Johnson has maintained a 3.45 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Illinois 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 Illinois Boys Basketball Players of the Year Jeremy Fears (2022-23, Joliet West High School), Jaden Schutt (2021-22, Yorkville Christian High School), Max Christie (2020-21, Rolling Meadows High School) and Adam Miller (2019-20, Morgan Park 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](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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