

**NIXA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSOURI FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (December 6, 2024) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Jackson Cantwell** of **Nixa High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Missouri Football Player of the Year**. Cantwell is the first Gatorade Missouri Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Nixa High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Cantwell as Missouri's best high school football player, and he's also been selected as a finalist for the distinguished Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December. With his selection, **Cantwell** joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fl.), Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, La.) and DJ Lagway (2023-24, Willis High School, Texas).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot-8, 305-pound junior left tackle had led the Eagles to a 13-0 record and a berth in the Class 6 state championship game. Cantwell anchored an offensive line that blocked for an attack averaging 44.8 points per game and 9.3 yards per play through 13 games. The 2023-24 Boys Track & Field Gatorade State Player of the Year, Cantwell amassed 153 pancake blocks and also ran for a touchdown. He is ranked as the No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2026 by Rivals.com.

A regular at Nixa's weekly Leadership Academy, a meeting that discusses leadership skills, Cantwell has volunteered locally at the Least of These Food Pantry, the only full-service pantry serving Christian County. He has also donated his time as a peer tutor and a youth track coach. "If he gets locked on your defensive player, they have little to no chance of getting off," said Ryan Cornelsen, head coach of Republic High School. "His overall size and strength is something I've never seen before. Nixa has the ability to just run behind him or pull him, so to me, he's what makes them tough to stop."

Cantwell has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school next fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states across 12 different high school sports - 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.

Cantwell joins recent Gatorade Missouri Football Players of the Year Aneyas Williams (2023-24, Hannibal High School), Jeremiyah Love (2022-23, Christian Brothers College High School), Kevin Coleman (2021-22, St. Mary's High School) and Mekhi Wingo (2020-21, De Smet Jesuit 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, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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