

**CHECOTAH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 6, 2024) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Elijah Thomas** of **Checotah High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Oklahoma Football Player of the Year**. Thomas is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Checotah 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 Thomas as Oklahoma’s best high school football player, and he 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).

The 6-foot-2, 194-pound senior wideout and free safety amassed more than 2,400 yards of total offense this past season, pulling down 72 receptions for 1,803 yards and 26 touchdowns and leading the Wildcats (8-5) to the Class 3A semifinals. Ranked as the nation’s No. 130 prospect in his class by Rivals.com, Thomas also rushed for 406 yards and 10 scores in addition to returning six kickoffs for a 39-yard average and a touchdown. On defense, he recorded 82 tackles, four interceptions, eight passes defended, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery.

Thomas has donated countless hours to local youth football camps for the past five years in addition to serving as the mascot at pep rallies in the elementary school. He has also served as a personal mentor for struggling students at the middle school. Thomas has participated in community trash pickup days as well and has volunteered by cleaning up the stadium after games. “Elijah Thomas is an absolute gem,” said Larry Newton, head coach of Eufaula High School. “He is an outstanding human being. He represents his school, town, county and state like no other player can. He’s also the best football player I’ve seen in a long while.”

Thomas has maintained a 3.27 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he had made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at the University of Oklahoma 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.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Football Players of the Year Andy Bass (2023-24, Heritage Hall), Emmanuel Crawford (2022-23, Grove High School), Braylin Presley (2021-22, Bixby High School) and Kendal Daniels (2020-21, Beggs 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 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.