

**IRMO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 **Aaron Brand, Jr.** of **Irmo High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade South Carolina Football Player of the Year**. Brand, Jr. is the first Gatorade South Carolina Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Irmo 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 Brand, Jr. as South Carolina’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).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot-2, 210-pound senior quarterback had led the Yellow Jackets to an 11-1 record and a berth in the Class AAAAA, Division 2 Lower State Tournament championship game. Brand passed for 2,358 yards and 27 touchdowns while also rushing for 1,647 yards and 22 scores through 12 games. The 2023 Class 4A Lower State Offensive Player of the Year, he was the MVP of the 2023 Class 4A state championship game for the Irmo basketball team and also a past team MVP for the Irmo baseball and track and field squads.

A drummer in his church choir, Brand has volunteered locally with Young Men United, a mentoring program associated with Irmo High School. He has also donated his time on behalf of the Special Olympics as well as by opening car doors as a greeter in drivelines at elementary schools. “AJ carries that team,” said Tom Knotts, head coach of Dutch Fork High School. “I’ve seen good players in my time [and] he’s in the top three. He’s Superman in cleats.”

Brand has maintained a weighted 3.90 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at Virginia Tech 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.

Brand, Jr. joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Football Players of the Year Zion Dobson (2023-24, Hampton County High School), Jarvis Green (2022-23, Dutch Fork High School) and Trent Pearman (2012-22 & 2020-21, D.W. Daniel 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).