

Connolly Cup

South Park's Adam Nunes wins 52nd Connolly Cup

- [Clevi Murray](#)

South Park senior running back Adam Nunes spent two weeks writing the best speech he could, just in case.

He dedicated so much time to a “what if” scenario because he wanted to be prepared for his chance to thank everyone who has helped him on his football journey. On Monday at Illo DiPaolo’s, Nunes’ moment came when he was announced as the 52nd winner of the Connolly Cup.

South Park High School running back Adam Nunes is announced as the winner of the 2024 Connolly Cup.

Nunes had about 30 supporters with him inside the medium-sized Tuscan room, and when Connolly Cup president Gregg O’Shei announced him as the winner, they all jumped out of their seats and began recording him on their smartphones. Then, Nunes took out his phone and read his speech. Nunes is the fourth Buffalo Public Schools student-athlete to win the award, joining Tyree Brown (South Park, 2015), Isaiah McDuffie (Bennett, 2016) and Ja’Meer Thomas (Bennett, 2023)

“I had a speech prepared for just in case,” Nunes said. “It took some time because I wanted to make sure I had everything down pat. I didn’t want to leave anyone out, and it took some time, maybe about two weeks.”

In his speech, Nunes thanked the Connolly Cup committee, the South Park coaching staff led by Tim Delaney and teammates. As Nunes praised those immediately around him, he made sure to dedicate a portion of his time at the podium to reflecting on his sister, Char’Dae, who died in February. Her favorite number was seven, the same number on his jersey, and it was only fitting that he was announced as the winner within the 7 o’clock hour.

It was an appropriate moment for a player who had to sacrifice. In a pass-heavy offense led by Noah Willoughby last season, Nunes had 46 carries for 325 yards and four touchdowns. After the 2023 season, Delaney didn’t shy away from what was next: a heavy dosage of Nunes. This season, the offense ran through him, and it led to one of the best single seasons in the history of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.



Adam Nunes, a running back for South Park, was named winner of the 2024 Connolly Cup. Harry Scull Jr., Buffalo News

Nunes had 224 carries for 2,468 yards and 34 touchdowns this season. He set the New York State Public High School Athletic Association single-game rushing record with 593 yards against Iroquois. He helped South Park (9-2) to the Section VI Class B final.

“I’m just so excited for Adam and our program,” Delaney said. “He’s been a model student-athlete for us over the last couple of seasons. He had a tremendous year, and we had a really good year. Obviously, would’ve liked to have won a sectional championship on top of it, but the year, for Adam, was outstanding. I can’t say enough about him as a kid and the type of character he is. I’m just ecstatic for him, just knowing the hard work he’s put into his football career.”

The Riverside Athletic Club awards the Connolly Cup annually to the area’s top player as voted on by a committee based on games through the sectional finals.

This year’s other finalists were Elijah Kimble (Canisius), Bryce Tubin (Clarence), Tate Catanese (CSP), Landon Welka (St. Francis), Rocco Panepinto (Sweet Home), Chase Bonta (Jamestown), Karter Giboo (Pioneer), Tyrone Clark Jr. (Lackawanna) and Justus Kleitz (Iroquois).

“I was so surprised to win, my heart skipped a beat,” Nunes said. “It all started with grinding in the offseason. With my sister watching down on me, she gave me the extra push.”