

## Devon Valley's speech for the 2019 Season Award Ceremony

First off I would like to thank my uncle and aunt for bringing me into yald and Coach Jason and Coach Leo for all the offseason practices in the summer all the coaches and staff who take the time out of their day whether it's leaving work early or spending some time away from their family to come support and guide us to not only become better football players but also to become responsible young adults. I especially want to thank Lito, Chewy, and Dave for giving us something to look forward to on weekends and most importantly continuing to keep kids off the streets. Going into my 5th year in yald you could see the amount of effort that goes into improving year by year. Whether it's new jerseys, new accessories, new events, there's always something that keeps a smile on all our faces. When I first came into the league, I was 13 years old and I was nervous about playing with all these older kids. Over time I got over it because of how quickly everyone makes you feel like family, but I still wasn't a big factor to the team because according to Lito I couldn't catch a cold. The following years I noticed how during training camps I have become stronger and faster and my coach started involving me more and during this time I learned a lot from my coaches and teammates. This gave me the confidence that I needed to contribute to my team. We had a couple of good seasons, but we didn't end with the result that we wanted. Last year we lost 2 big names not only on the 49ers but in Yald. My brothers Brandon and Juan. We all looked up to them because they were the leaders of our team but most importantly I would always watch how they would act in certain moments whether it was bringing us up after a loss or not getting upset when someone messes up on the field and I always kept that with me. Thanks to Yald there were more players with this same attitude in the league that people looked up to as a leader or like their big brothers. A lot of them aged out last year but I will remember that when the season was over and most of these guys had played their last ever game in yald they came up to me and told me that next year was my year it was my time to lead my team. It's crazy how time flies from when I was a new face scared to step on the same field as these guys and years later they turned out to be my brothers and I ended up being one of the leaders younger kids look up to now. I often find myself helping the younger guys with things like how to do a route or just giving them tips in general because we all have been in their position before and I want them to feel welcomed into our family. Yald has developed a second home for me and most other kids in the league and every weekend we don't just come to play football it is also a time where we can spend time with each other and joke around. Yald has matured me as I notice the difference in certain things about myself from when I was younger to now on and off the field. 1 thing is being able to come up on stage right now. Last week my coach told us a quote which was "A man isn't defined by how he falls a man is defined by how he gets up" and this quote shows another way how I've matured because in these last years after a tough playoff loss I have gotten very emotional and didn't want to talk to anyone and unfortunately we faced another tough loss this year and I found myself immediately looking for my teammates to make sure they get through it and seeing their tears just made me want to get even better for next year because at one point I felt as if I let them down. But everyone goes through losses and all we can say is let's prepare for next year. I hope that I'm setting a good example for my teammates and other kids in the league so that the future of yald be even more successful and accomplished more than what we have accomplished now!