

**MARIETTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 6, 2019) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Arik Gilbert of Marietta High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year**. Gilbert is the second Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Marietta High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Gilbert as Georgia’s best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Gilbert joins an elite group of past state football award-winners, including Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas) and Christian McCaffrey (2012-13, 2013-14, Valor Christian High School, Colo.).

The 6-foot-5, 255-pound senior tight end had led the Blue Devils to an 11-2 record and the Class 7A semifinals at the time of his selection. Gilbert caught 81 passes for 1,436 yards and 12 touchdowns through 13 games. A two-time All-State honoree, he was also named Region 3 Offensive Player of the Year as a junior and has been selected to play in the 2020 All-American Bowl. Gilbert is ranked as the nation’s No. 1 tight end prospect in the Class of 2020 by ESPN and Rivals, and No. 11 in the country regardless of position by Rivals.

The founder of a campus-wide initiative called “Whisper,” which urges students to have device-free conversations and supports diversity and inclusion efforts, Gilbert has also volunteered on behalf of the East Atlanta Kids Club, Habitat for Humanity and March of Dimes. A parishioner at the Life Revolution Church, Gilbert has also donated more than 50 hours to Marietta elementary schools and the Marietta Youth Football program. “Arik Gilbert is one of the best players I’ve ever coached against,” said John Reid, head coach at Rome High School. “He’s huge, fast and has great hands. He’s the best player on the field at any position he lines up.”

Gilbert has maintained a 3.14 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at Louisiana State University next fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track and field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Gilbert joins recent Gatorade Georgia Football Players of the Year Jamious Griffin (2018-19, Rome High School), Trevor Lawrence (2017-18 and 2016-17, Cartersville High School), Jake Fromm (2015-16, Houston County High School) and A.J. Gray (2014-15, Washington County High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade’s cause marketing platform “Play it Forward,” Gilbert has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program’s inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.