

**WEDDINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (December 6, 2019) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Will Shipley of Weddington High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year**. Shipley is the first Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Weddington 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 Shipley as North Carolina'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, Shipley 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 5-foot-11, 198-pound junior running back had led the Warriors to a 14-0 record and a berth in the Class 3AA semifinals at the time of his selection. Shipley rushed for 1,639 yards and 25 touchdowns on 148 carries through 14 games. He also caught 30 passes for 509 yards and nine touchdowns. A MaxPreps Sophomore All-American, Shipley is a three-time All-Conference selection and is ranked as the No. 20 prospect in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.

Shipley has volunteered locally on behalf of homeless families and youth sports programs. "Will Shipley can really wreck your whole game plan," said Michael Hertz, head coach at Porter Ridge High. "He's incredibly effective at a lot of things—he can run it inside, run it outside, catch it short, catch it deep, even play defense. He's made himself into a great player."

Shipley has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Shipley joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Football Players of the Year Sam Howell (2018-19, Sun Valley High School), Quavaris Crouch (2017-18, Harding University High School), Zamir White (2016-17, Scotland High School), Chazz Surratt (2015-16, East Lincoln High School) and Josh Ladowski (2014-15, Lake Norman High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Shipley 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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