

**STEILACOOM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 **Emeka Egbuka of Steilacoom High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Washington Football Player of the Year**. Egbuka is the first Gatorade Washington Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Steilacoom 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 Egbuka as Washington’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, Egbuka 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-1, 190-pound junior wide receiver and defensive back had led the Sentinels (11-2) and a berth in the Class 2A state championship game at the time of his selection. Egbuka caught 65 passes for 1,427 yards and 22 touchdowns in 13 games. He also returned three punts for scores and rushed for four TDs. Defensively, as the No. 8-rated prospect in the Class of 2021 by 247Sports, he recorded 28 tackles and seven interceptions, returning a pair for touchdowns.

Egbuka has volunteered locally as a youth football coach. “Emeka scared us to death,” said Rory Rosenbach, head coach of Union High School, which won the 2018 Class 4A state title. “We schemed to not let him touch the ball as a wide receiver. When they put him at running back, we held our breath. We accidentally punted to him once. He took it to the house. He’s a really good player.”

Egbuka has maintained a 3.99 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.

Egbuka joins recent Gatorade Washington Football Players of the Year Jacob Holcomb (2018-19, Puyallup High School), Isaiah Ifanse (2017-18, Bellevue High School), Jack Colletto (2016-17, Camas High School), Jacob Eason (2015-16, Lake Stevens High School) and Austin Joyner (2014-15, Marysville-Pilchuck High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade’s cause marketing platform “Play it Forward,” Egbuka 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.