

**BRYANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 13, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Austin Ledbetter of Bryant High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year. Ledbetter is the first Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Bryant 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 Ledbetter as Arkansas's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Ledbetter 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-2, 200-pound senior quarterback passed for 3,086 yards and 41 touchdowns this past season, leading the Hornets (13-0) to their third consecutive Class 7A state championship. Ledbetter completed 173 of 269 passes and threw just five interceptions, finishing his career unbeaten as a starting quarterback. The Class 6A/7A Offensive Player of the Year, he also won the Landers Award as the state's top player.

A devoted member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Ledbetter has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics. "We played against some special kids in the state, but Austin Ledbetter was the best player we saw," said Chris Wood, head coach at Har-Ber High School. "He has a great feel for the game, he's calm in the pocket and he makes all the throws. He's a real leader."

Ledbetter has maintained a 3.66 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas this 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 & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Ledbetter joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Football Players of the Year Jacoby Criswell (2019-20, Morrilton High School), Justice Hill (2018-19, Little Rock Christian Academy), Layne Hatcher (2017-18, Pulaski Academy), and Taylor Powell (2016-17, Fayetteville High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Ledbetter has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Ledbetter is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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