

**CHESHIRE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT 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 Wilfredo Aybar of Cheshire Academy as its 2020-21 Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year. Aybar is the second Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Cheshire Academy.

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 Aybar as Connecticut'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, Aybar 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-4, 240-pound junior defensive end recorded 39 tackles and four sacks during an abbreviated three-game fall season for the Cats. A two-time First Team All-New England Prep School Athletic Council selection, Aybar is ranked as the nation's No. 112 recruit in the Class of 2022 by ESPN.com and is considering more than 20 scholarship offers from high-major Division I programs. He concluded his junior year with 177 tackles and 18.5 sacks in his prep football career.

A native of Fall River, Mass., Aybar has volunteered as a youth football coach. "On the field, Wilfredo's a complete terror," said LJ Spinnato, head coach of Choate Rosemary Hall. "He's strong, he's powerful, he's quick—he kicked our butts, no doubt about that."

Aybar has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Aybar joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Football Players of the Year Jack Wallace (2019-20, St. Joseph High School), Cornelius Johnson (2018-19, Brunswick School), Spencer Lockwood (2017-18, Killingly High School), and Ben Mason (2016-17, Newtown High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Aybar has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Aybar 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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