

**HIGHLAND SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Kelvin Gilliam of Highland Springs High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Virginia Football Player of the Year. Gilliam is the first Gatorade Virginia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Highland Springs 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 Gilliam as Virginia'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, Gilliam 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, 260-pound senior defensive end recorded 48 tackles, 16 tackles for loss and 11 sacks this past season, leading the Springers (9-1) to the Class 5A state championship game. Gilliam also scored two safeties for a defense that notched five shutouts and allowed just 4.4 points per game. The Region 5B Defensive Player of the Year, he was also a First Team All-State selection.

Gilliam has served as a peer tutor at his school and has volunteered locally feeding the homeless. "Kelvin Gilliam is just a pure, all-around ball player," said Marcus Lewis, head coach at Varina High School. "He's strong and fundamentally sound, and he continued to get better and better over the years. He can run over people on defense, and he forces you to go the other way."

Gilliam has maintained a 4.16 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma 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.

Gilliam joins recent Gatorade Virginia Football Players of the Year TreVeyon Henderson (2019-20, Hopewell High School), Brandon Smith (2018-19, Louisa County High School), Ricky Slade (2017-18, C.D. Hylton High School), and Lamont Atkins (2016-17, Lake Braddock High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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