

**MUSSELMAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST 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 Blake Hartman of Musselman High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Football Player of the Year. Hartman is the first Gatorade West Virginia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Musselman 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 Hartman as West 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, Hartman 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, 215-pound senior running back and defensive back rushed for 1,696 yards and 30 touchdowns this past season, leading the Applemen (7-1) to the Class AAA state quarterfinals. Hartman **averaged** 10.6 yards per carry, also threw for a touchdown pass and returned two kickoffs and two punts for scores. A three-time First Team All-State selection and the 2020 Martinsburg Journal Player of the Year, he concluded his prep football career with 6,309 rushing yards along with a state-record 748 points and a state record-tying 118 total touchdowns.

Hartman has volunteered locally as part of beautification projects and with an elementary school literacy outreach program. He has also donated his time as a youth football coach. "Blake is the best running back I have seen in a long time," said Jeremy Taylor, head coach of Hurricane High School. "Power, speed and vision—he is the total package."

Hartman has maintained a weighted 4.15 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at Lehigh University 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.

Hartman joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Football Players of the Year JJ Roberts (2019-20, Cabell Midland High School), Graeson Malashevich (2018-19, Spring Valley High School), Tyson Bagent (2017-18, Martinsburg High School), and Isaac Brown (2016-17, Martinsburg High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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