

**HUEYTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 7, 2021) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Earl Woods of Hueytown High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year**. Woods is the second Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Hueytown 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 Woods as Alabama'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, Woods joins an elite alumni association of state 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 5-foot-10, 170-pound junior quarterback exceeded 3,000 yards passing and 2,000 yards rushing this past season, leading the Golden Gophers (13-2) to the Class 6A state championship game. A transfer from Shades Valley High, where he was a two-time team Offensive MVP, Woods completed 171-of-302 passes for 3,072 yards and 32 touchdowns. On the ground, Woods rushed for 2,123 yards and 35 scores on 314 carries. He had 10 games with multiple TD passes or TD runs, including six games with both.

Woods has volunteered locally at an elementary school and as a youth football coach. He has also donated his time to multiple community beautification projects. "Earl is, hands down, the best player we have seen this year," said Aryvia Holmes, head coach of McAdory High School. "Anytime you get a QB that can beat you with his arm and legs, they are basically unstoppable. You think you can contain him, but he is so fast and elusive that he makes the first guy miss every time."

Woods has maintained an A average 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 & 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Woods joins recent Gatorade Alabama Football Players of the Year Conner Harrell (2020-21, Thompson High School), Kristian Story (2019-20, Lanett High School), Bo Nix (2018-19, Pinson Valley High School), and Asa Martin (2017-18, Austin High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Woods has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Woods is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

