

**RABUN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (December 7, 2021) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Gunner Stockton of Rabun County High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year**. Stockton is the first Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Rabun County 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 Stockton as Georgia'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, Stockton 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 6-foot-1, 220-pound senior quarterback passed for 4,134 yards and 55 touchdowns this past season, leading the Wildcats to the Class 2A quarterfinals. Stockton completed 236 of 331 passes, with just one interception, while also rushing for 956 yards and 15 touchdowns on 137 carries. A four-time All-State honoree, he was selected to play in the 2022 All-American Bowl. Stockton finished his prep career with state records for passing touchdowns (177), total touchdowns (254) and total yards (18,024).

A devoted member of his church community, Stockton has volunteered locally on behalf of food donation drives. "Gunner Stockton is special," said Stewart Young, head coach at Saluda (S.C.) High School. "He's big, fast and he can flat out spin it. He can fly on his feet and he seeks out contact when running. I've never coached against a quarterback like him."

Stockton has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of Georgia 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.

Stockton joins recent Gatorade Georgia Football Players of the Year Brock Vandagriff (2020-21, Prince Avenue Christian School), Arik Gilbert (2019-20, Marietta High School), Jamious Griffin (2018-19, Rome High School), and Trevor Lawrence (2017-18, Cartersville 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, Stockton 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. Stockton 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).