

**CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 **Ayden Pereira of Central Catholic High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year**. Pereira is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Central Catholic 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 Pereira as Massachusetts'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, Pereira 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, 190-pound senior quarterback passed for 2,823 yards and 34 touchdowns this past season, leading the Raiders (12-2) to the Division 1 Super Bowl. He also rushed for 790 yards and 14 scores, averaging 6.4 yards per carry. A two-time Boston Globe and Boston Herald All-Scholastic, he was the 2020 Boston Herald Offensive Player of the Year.

Pereira has volunteered locally with the National Down Syndrome Society. "Ayden is a great player who has really evolved into a complete quarterback," said Tom Ryan, head coach of Methuen High School. "He is a dual threat as a runner and thrower. He makes every throw a high school quarterback needs to make."

Pereira has maintained a weighted 3.87 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Maine 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.

Pereira joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Football Players of the Year Owen McGowan (2020-21, Catholic Memorial High School), Kalel Mullings (2019-20, Milton Academy), Mike Sainristil (2018-19, Everett High School), and Sal Frelick (2017-18, Lexington 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, Pereira 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. Pereira 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.

