

**CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Omarion Hampton of Cleveland High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year**. Hampton is the first Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Cleveland 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 Hampton as North Carolina'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, Hampton 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, 220-pound senior running back rushed for 1,948 yards and 39 touchdowns on 161 carries this past season, leading the Rams (11-1) to the third round of the Class 4A playoffs. Hampton averaged 12.1 yards per rush, and also caught 11 passes for 272 yards and three scores. A three-time All-State selection and two-time Greater Neuse River Conference Player of the Year, he has been selected to play in the 2022 All-American Bowl.

Hampton has volunteered locally as a youth football coach. "Hampton is an unbelievable player," said Daniel Finn, head coach at South Garner High School. "He's big, strong, physical, with great speed. We played against (current University of Georgia standout) Zamir White a couple of years ago and this kid is every bit as good."

Hampton has maintained a 3.26 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football at the University of North Carolina 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.

Hampton joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Football Players of the Year Jalon Walker (2020-21, Salisbury High School), Will Shipley (2019-20, Weddington High School), Sam Howell (2018-19, Sun Valley High School), and Quavaris Crouch (2017-18, Harding University 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, Hampton 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. Hampton 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).

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