

**MILL CREEK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 6, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Caleb Downs** of **Mill Creek High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year**. Downs is the first Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Mill Creek 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 Downs 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 January, Downs joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Trevor Lawrence (2018-19 & 2016-17, Cartersville High School, Ga.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas) and Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.).

The 6-foot, 195-pound senior safety and running back led the Hawks to a 14-1 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Downs recorded 76 tackles and made five interceptions, returning two of them for touchdowns. Downs also rushed for 390 yards and 20 scores, including three TDs in the Hawks' 70-35 win over Carrollton High School in the state final. Ranked as the nation's No. 13 recruit in the Class of 2023 by 247Sports.com, he also had 36 receptions for 422 yards and three scores.

Downs has volunteered locally with Gen50, a faith-based peer leadership group, and as a youth football coach. He has also donated his time as a member of the Mill Creek High School football leadership council and as part of local food drives. "Caleb is on a different level," said Casey Wogt, head coach of Dacula High School. "He lines up in multiple spots on the field and has the ability to make plays at all of them."

Downs has maintained an A average in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he'd made a verbal commitment to play football on scholarship at the University of Alabama 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Downs joins recent Gatorade Georgia Football Players of the Year Gunner Stockton (2021-22, Rabun County High School), Brock Vandagriff (2020-21, Prince Avenue Christian School), Arik Gilbert (2019-20, Marietta High School), and Jamious Griffin (2018-19, Rome High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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

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