

**KAHUKU HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE HAWAII FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 6, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Liona Lefau of Kahuku High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Hawaii Football Player of the Year**. Lefau is the fourth Gatorade Hawaii Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Kahuku 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 Lefau as Hawaii’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, Lefau 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-1, 215-pound senior linebacker led the Red Raiders (12-2) to their second consecutive state championship, recording 52.5 tackles, including six for loss, along with four sacks and two forced fumbles. Lefau was especially impactful in Kahuku High School’s postseason run, collecting 13.5 solo tackles, a sack and a forced fumble in the Red Raiders’ final two victories.

Lefau has volunteered locally by participating in Hoapili camp activities for students with special needs, and also created the Liona Lefau Camp serving more than 300 elementary-aged children across Oahu. “Liona is the ideal player for any coach,” said Kahuku High School coach Sterling Carvalho. “His attitude, work ethic and dedication to the team were outstanding. He was the unquestioned leader of our stout defense and his leadership raised the standard of our players.”

Lefau has maintained a 3.2 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he’d made a verbal commitment to play football on scholarship at the University of Texas 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.

Lefau joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Football Players of the Year Kainoa Carvalho (2021-22, Kahuku High School), Titus Mokiao-Atimalala (2020-21, Campbell High School), Jayden deLaura (2019-20, Saint Louis School), and Dillon Gabriel (2018-19, Mililani 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](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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