

**TOMS RIVER NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 **Micah Ford** of **Toms River North High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade New Jersey Football Player of the Year**. Ford is the first Gatorade New Jersey Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Toms River North 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 Ford as New Jersey'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, Ford 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, 200-pound junior quarterback and free safety led the Mariners to a 14-0 record and the Group 5 state championship this past season. Ford rushed for 2,360 yards and 33 touchdowns and passed for 1,203 yards and 17 scores. He authored 23 touchdowns in Toms River North High School's five-game postseason run to the title. Defensively, the 2021 First Team All-State selection recorded 77 tackles, including 9 for a loss, and four interceptions, returning one for a touchdown.

Ford has volunteered locally as a youth football coach, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Micah Ford is quite clearly a special player," said Jay Dagato, head coach of Marlboro High School. "He's got speed, size and toughness. He reaches top speed so fast and outruns pursuit angles. And while he isn't asked to throw the ball much, when he does throw it, he has an impressive arm."

Ford has maintained an A average in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Ford joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Football Players of the Year LeQuint Allen (2021-22, Millville High School), Audric Estime (2020-21, St. Joseph Regional High School), Fadil Diggs (2019-20, Woodrow Wilson High School), and Howard Cross (2018-19, St. Joseph Regional 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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