

**COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 3, 2023) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Colton Brunell** of **Columbus High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Wisconsin Football Player of the Year**. Brunell is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Columbus High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Brunell as Wisconsin’s best high school football player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fla.), Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, La.) and Jackson Arnold (2022-23, John H. Guyer High School, Texas).

The 6-foot, 200-pound senior running back and linebacker rushed for 2,298 yards and 32 touchdowns this past season, leading the Cardinals (10-2) to the Division 5 state tournament quarterfinals. The Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Small School Offensive Player of the Year, Brunell amassed 83 tackles, including 11 for a loss, along with one sack and a forced fumble. A two-time, two-way First Team All-State selection and the 2023 Elroy Hirsch Award winner as the state’s top senior running back, he concluded his prep football career with a state-record 7,416 rushing yards.

A school representative for Columbus at the Capital Conference Leadership and Sportsmanship Committee, Brunell has volunteered locally as a youth football and basketball coach. He has also donated his time on behalf of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. “What makes Colton special is he does everything for Columbus,” said Tyler Huber, head coach of Lake Mills High. “He rarely came off the field at running back, linebacker and also on special teams. Colton not only started both ways, but he made a huge impact in all three phases of the game.”

Brunell has maintained a 3.13 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of North Dakota 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.

Brunell joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Football Players of the Year Wynn Stang (2022-23, Mukwonago High School), Myles Burkett (2021-22, Franklin High School), Hunter Wohler (2020-21, Muskego High School), and Alex Current (2019-20, Muskego High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

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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