

GILBERT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE IOWA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 6, 2024) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Will Hawthorne** of **Gilbert High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Iowa Football Player of the Year**. Hawthorne is the first Gatorade Iowa Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Gilbert High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Hawthorne as Iowa's best high school football player, and he joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Emmitt Smith (1986-87, Escambia High School, Fl.), Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, La.) and DJ Lagway (2023-24, Willis High School, Texas).

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound senior running back and linebacker rushed for 2,263 yards on a grueling 328 carries this past season, averaging 6.9 yards per attempt and leading the Tigers (9-2) to the Class 4A postseason quarterfinals. Hawthorne scored 28 touchdowns, which led all classes at the time of his selection, and also caught four passes for 48 yards. On defense, he recorded 44.5 tackles, including 10 for a loss, and two sacks. A two-time All-State selection as well as the District 4 Offensive and Defensive MVP in successive years, he is ranked as the state’s No. 8 prospect by Prep RedZone.

A member of the student council, Key Club and Concert Choir, Hawthorne has volunteered locally by mentoring at-risk younger students with Youth and Shelter Services in addition to serving as both a Miracle League buddy for special needs children and a Camp Invention youth STEM program counselor. He has also donated his time as a youth football coach and as part of an Iowa State University campus cleanup effort. “I don’t think that there was anyone more valuable to their team this year than Will Hawthorne,” said Scott Heitland, Dallas Center-Grimes High School head coach. “If there was a play to be made, Will would make the play. His team ran through him, but what was so impressive was how he pushed others to work and elevate their game as well. His efforts on the field were obvious, but his leadership on and off can’t be overlooked. A humble leader, he worked his tail off and in the process and had one of the best single-season efforts of any player in recent memory.”

Hawthorne has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he had made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at Iowa State University next fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states across 12 different high school sports - 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.

Hawthorne joins recent Gatorade Iowa Football Players of the Year Preston Ries (2023-24, Monticello High School), Abu Sama (2022-23, Southeast Polk High School), Aaron Graves (2021-22, Southeast Valley High School) and Cooper DeJean (2020-21, Odebolt Arthur Battle Creek Ida Grove 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, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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