

**CAPITAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (December 6, 2024) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Merek Mihelish** of **Capital High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Montana Football Player of the Year**. Mihelish is the seventh Gatorade Montana Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Capital 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 Mihelish as Montana’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-1, 185-pound senior quarterback passed for 2,862 yards and 34 touchdowns this past season, leading the Bruins (11-1) to the Class AA state title. Mihelish completed 73 percent of passes, threw only three interceptions and also rushed for 850 yards and eight touchdowns, averaging 6.9 yards per carry. A First Team All-State selection, he is also an All-State hurdler on the track.

A participant in Poetry Out Loud competitions, Mihelish has volunteered locally on behalf of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill as well as both tackle and flag football youth leagues. He has also donated his time in association with his team by helping families in the community to move house and maintain their landscapes. “Merek was, without a doubt, the best player we saw all season,” said Dane Broadhead, head coach of Helena High School. “An explosive playmaker, he was a true dual-threat and leader of one of the best offenses in the state. A combination of accuracy, decision-making and big play ability, he was the complete package and he’s a worthy recipient of this prestigious award.”

Mihelish has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he had made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at the University of Montana 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.

Mihelish joins recent Gatorade Montana Football Players of the Year Kellen Harrison (2023-24, Bozeman High School), Talon Marsh (2022-23, Capital High School), Taco Dowler (2021-22, Billings West High School) and Dylan Rollins (2020-21, Sentinel 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](http://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](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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