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**OWATONNA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jason Williamson of Owatonna Senior High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year. Williamson is the first Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Owatonna Senior 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 Williamson as Minnesota's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Williamson joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mitchell Trubisky (2012-13, Mentor High School, Ohio), Greg Olsen (2002-03, Wayne Hills High School, N.J.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas), Harrison Smith (2006-07 Knoxville Catholic High School, Tenn.), Latavius Murray (2007-08, Onondaga High School, N.Y.), Brock Osweiler (2008-09, Flathead High School, Mont.) and Leonard Fournette (2014-15 & 2012-13, St. Augustine High School, La.).

The 6-foot-1, 190-pound junior running back and free safety led the Huskies to a 12-1 record and the Class AAAAA state championship this past season. Williamson rushed for 2,316 yards and 38 touchdowns. He also caught four TD passes and returned two kickoffs for scores. Defensively, he recorded 28 tackles and six interceptions. Williamson scored 19 touchdowns in five postseason games, including five TD runs and a kickoff return for a score in a 63-26 win over Elk River High in the state final.

Williamson has volunteered locally as a youth football and basketball coach. "Jason Williamson is a game-breaker," said Bubba Sullivan, head coach of Northfield High. "His speed makes him special, but he also is willing to put his shoulder down when needed."

Williamson has maintained a 3.69 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school next 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 work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Williamson joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Football Players of the Year Wade Sullivan (2016-17, Lakeville North High School), J.D. Spielman (2015-16, Eden Prairie High School), Ryan Schlichte (2014-15, Mankato West High School), Jacques Perra (2013-14, Roseville Area High School), Bridgeport Tusler (2012-13, Osseo Senior High School), Philip Nelson (2011-12, Mankato West High School), Eric Kline (2010-11, Blaine High School), and A.J. Tarpley (2009-10, Wayzata High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Williamson will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.