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**WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Seth Benson of Washington High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year. Benson is the seventh Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Washington 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 Benson as South Dakota'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, Benson 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, 205-pound senior linebacker recorded 105 tackles this past season, leading the Warriors to a 12-0 record and their third consecutive Class 1AAAA state championship. Benson made 13 tackles for loss, along with six sacks and four forced fumbles. He is a two-time All-State and two-time All-Conference selection and was named to the Argus Leader Elite 45 team.

A devoted member of his church youth group and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Benson has participated in multiple mission trips to help the underprivileged and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs. "Seth Benson is the best defender we faced," said Scott Hagen, head coach at Stevens High. "His size, speed and athletic ability set him apart. He was very aggressive against the run, very good in his pass drops and a sure tackler. Teams really have to account for him on defense."

Benson has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at South Dakota State University in the fall of 2018.

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.

Benson joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Football Players of the Year Spencer Neugebauer (2016-17, Mitchell High School), Matt Farniok (2015-16, Washington High School), Luke Loudenburg (2014-15, Howard High School), Caden Quintanilla (2013-14, Lincoln High School), Cole Langer (2012-13, Dell Rapids High School), Alex Schultz (2011-12, Lincoln High School), Matt Hermanson (2010-11, Washington High School), and Austin Sumner (2009-10, Brandon Valley High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Benson 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/>.

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