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**PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® RHODE ISLAND FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 2, 2010) — In its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Ben Willett of Portsmouth High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Rhode Island Football Player of the Year. Willett is the second Gatorade Rhode Island Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Portsmouth 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 Willett as Rhode Island's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Willett joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Wes Welker (1999-00, Heritage Hall HS, Okla.), Terrell Suggs (1999-00, Hamilton HS, Ariz.), Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.) and Jerome Bettis (1989-90, Mackenzie HS, Mich.).

The 6-foot, 180-pound senior quarterback and safety has led the Patriots to a 10-2 record and a berth in the Division I state championship against Bishop Hendricken High, scheduled for Dec. 4. At the time of his selection, Willett had rushed for 1,107 yards and nine touchdowns on 186 carries. He had also passed for 499 yards and nine touchdowns on 44-of-96 attempts with six interceptions, and on defense he had recorded 84 tackles and five interceptions, returning one for a touchdown. An All-American midfielder for the Portsmouth High boys' lacrosse team, Willett had never played quarterback before this season.

Willett has maintained a 3.55 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally at an area soup kitchen and as a camp counselor.

"Ben Willett is one heck of a player," said Bill McCagney, head coach of rival Barrington High. "He's just a tough, tough runner. He's a quarterback and he's effective as a passer, but he's kind of rough around the edges. As a runner, he's just a tank to bring down. On both sides of the ball, he's dangerous."

Willett remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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 ESPN RISE and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Willett joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Football Players of the Year Mike Read (2009-10, Barrington), Dave D'Errico (2008-09, North Kingstown) and Bobby Bentsen (2007-08, Warwick Veterans) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. 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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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