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**MANKATO WEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 1, 2011) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Philip Nelson of Mankato West High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year. Nelson is the first Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Mankato West 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 Nelson as Minnesota's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Nelson 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-3, 216-pound senior quarterback passed for 2,559 yards and 35 touchdowns, completing 159-of-238 passes while throwing just four interceptions this past season, leading the Scarlets (11-1) to the Class 4A semifinals. A three-time First Team All-Conference selection, Nelson ranks second in state history for both career completions (448) and touchdown passes (92).

Nelson has maintained a 3.49 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of an area assisted living facility.

"Philip Nelson is hands down the greatest high school football player I've ever seen," said Andy Rostberg, head coach of rival Hutchinson High. "I've been coaching high school football for 25 years and have had kids who have made it to the NFL and coached against kids who have made it to the NFL. Nelson is the best of them all."

Nelson has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at the University of Minnesota beginning in the fall of 2012.

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 ESPNHS 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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Football Players of the Year Eric Kline (2010-11, Blaine High School) A.J. Tarpley (2009-10, Wayzata), Anders Lee (2008-09, Edina High School) and Michael Floyd (2007-08, Cretin-Derham Hall) 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.

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