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**CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NEW MEXICO 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 Cole Gautsche of Cleveland High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Mexico Football Player of the Year. Gautsche is the first Gatorade New Mexico Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Cleveland 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 Gautsche as New Mexico's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Gautsche 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-4, 218-pound senior quarterback has led the Storm to a 12-0 record and a berth in the Class 5A state championship game against Mayfield High, scheduled for Dec. 3. Gautsche passed for 2,783 yards and 35 touchdowns through 12 games, completing 123-of-199 attempts against just four interceptions. A 2010 First Team All-District performer, Gautsche has also rushed for 1,162 yards and 23 touchdowns on 137 carries. He has accumulated more than 4,000 yards both rushing and passing in three years as a starting quarterback, including one year for Aransas Pass (Texas) High.

Gautsche has maintained a 3.79 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally at a food bank, an animal shelter and as a youth football counselor.

"Cole Gautsche is the best high school quarterback that I have been around in my career," said Heath Ridenour, Cleveland's offensive coordinator. "He has every intangible asset that all great quarterbacks possess. His ability to read defenses and deliver the ball on time makes our offense the best in the state."

Gautsche has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at New Mexico State University beginning in the fall of 2012. He will graduate early to begin attending classes on the Las Cruces campus during the upcoming spring semester.

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.

Gautsche joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Football Players of the Year Ryan Trujillo (2010-11, Manzano High School) Ronnie Daniels (2009-10, La Cueva), Troy Harris (2008-09, Rio Rancho High School) and Landry Jones (2007-08, Artesia) 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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