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**GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® WEST VIRGINIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 1, 2011) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Ryan Switzer of George Washington High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade West Virginia Football Player of the Year. Switzer is the first Gatorade West Virginia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from George 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 Switzer as West Virginia's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Switzer 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 5-foot-10, 180-pound junior running back and defensive back has led the Patriots to a 13-0 record and a berth in the Class AAA state final vs. Martinsburg High, scheduled for Dec. 2. Switzer rushed for 2,601 yards and 39 touchdowns on 270 carries through 13 games. The 2011 Don Nehlen Chapter of the National Football Foundation High School Player of the year, he was named the ESPNHS East Region Player of the Week for Nov. 9 when he ran 20 times for 333 yards and six touchdowns and scored a seventh time on a 51-yard punt return in a 56-12 win over Parkersburg High.

Switzer has maintained a 3.9 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and as a youth football camp counselor.

"Ryan Switzer is without a doubt the best player in the state of West Virginia," said Corey Beck, head coach of rival Lincoln High. "He was the unanimous player of the year in our conference and we play in one of the toughest conferences in the state. He is the real deal."

Switzer 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 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.

Switzer joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Football Players of the Year Keion Wright (2010-11, Capital High School) Allan Wasonga (2009-10, Parkersburg), Aaron Slusher (2008-09, South Charleston High School) and Josh Jenkins (2007-08, Parkersburg) 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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