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**LEOMINSTER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MASSACHUSETTS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 5, 2013) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Neil O'Connor of Leominster High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year. O'Connor is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Leominster 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 O'Connor as Massachusetts's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, O'Connor 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-1, 190-pound senior quarterback and safety passed for 2,132 yards and 24 touchdowns this past season, completing 121-of-194 attempts and leading the Blue Devils (10-1) to the Central Region, Division 2 championship game. O'Connor also rushed for 673 yards and 11 scores on 81 carries. On defense, the 2012 Worcester Telegram & Gazette Defensive Player of the Year recorded 120 tackles, five interceptions—returning two for touchdowns—and forced one fumble.

O'Connor has maintained a 3.32 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Leominster High G.I.V.E Foundation, a community outreach group, he has volunteered locally as a peer mentor to special needs students, as a youth football, baseball and basketball coach and donated his time to area beautification projects.

"Neil O'Connor is the best," said Chris Lindstrom, head coach of Shepherd Hill High. "Not only did he hurt us offensively but he made several touchdown-saving tackles from the safety position."

O'Connor 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 the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

O'Connor joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Football Players of the Year Alex Moore (2012-2013, St. John's Preparatory School), Jonathan DiBiao (2011-12, Everett High School), Matt Costello (2010-11, Everett High School), Nick LaSpada (2009-10, Billerica Memorial), Matt Grimard (2008-09, Dracut High School) and Matt Bellomo (2007-08, Holliston) 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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