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**NEW CANAAN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® CONNECTICUT FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 4, 2014) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Zach Allen of New Canaan High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year. Allen is the second Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year to be chosen from New Canaan 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 Allen as Connecticut's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Allen 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-6, 248-pound senior defensive end, linebacker and tight end has led the Rams to a 9-1 record and a berth in the Class L-Large state semifinals against Wethersfield High, scheduled for Dec. 6. At the time of his selection, Allen had tallied 83 tackles, 12.5 sacks, seven forced fumbles, 10 pass break-ups and two interceptions, returning one for a touchdown. On offense, the 2013 Connecticut High School Coaches Association First Team All-State selection caught seven passes for 75 yards and three touchdowns through 10 games.

Allen has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit cancer and diabetes research in addition to donating his time as a youth football coach and mentor.

"In our preparation for New Canaan, we were sometimes in awe of the things Zach does on the football field," said Bruce Cunningham, head coach of Wilton High. "He makes the entire defense better. As one coach put it, 'Maybe Ohio State or Michigan has someone to block him, but we do not.'"

Allen has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at Northwestern University in the fall of 2015.

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.

Allen joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Football Players of the Year Dario Highsmith (2013-14, Middletown High School), Colin Moore (2012-13, Avon High School), Casey Cochran (2011-12 & 2010-11, Masuk High School), Kevin Pierre-Louis (2009-10, King Low Heywood Thomas), Mike Osiecki (2008-09, Seymour High School) and Alex Thomas (2007-08, Ansonia) 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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