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**WASHINGTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® GEORGIA 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 A.J. Gray of Washington County High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year. Gray is the second Gatorade Georgia Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Washington County 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 Gray as Georgia's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Gray 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-2, 208-pound senior quarterback has led the Golden Hawks to a 13-0 record and a berth in the Class AAA state semifinals, scheduled for Dec. 5. Gray threw for 1,563 yards and 21 touchdowns against five interceptions on 77-of-147 passing through 13 games. The returning Class AAA Offensive Player of the Year as named by the Georgia Sports Writers Association, Gray also rushed for 1,927 yards and 34 touchdowns on 156 carries. As a defensive back, Gray amassed 57 tackles and nine interceptions, returning four for touchdowns as the anchor of a defense that allowed just 12.6 points per game.

A basketball and baseball standout as well, Gray has maintained a 3.5 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a youth football and basketball instructor, he has volunteered as a member of his school's student council, as part of a charitable road race and on behalf of Rotary International.

"He is an outstanding ambassador of the high school game right now," said Lemuel Lackey, head coach of rival Laney High. "The young man has shown that the student-athlete of today can possess the quality combination that every coach desires—both scholarly student and high-character, outstanding athlete. The way he carries himself on and off the field, I could only hope and pray as a coach that my son exemplifies these same characteristics while participating in the arena of high school athletics."

Gray has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at Georgia Tech beginning 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.

Gray joins recent Gatorade Georgia Football Players of the Year Deshaun Watson (2013-14, Gainesville High School), Taylor Lamb (2012-13, Calhoun High School), Kenyan Drake (2011-12, Hillgrove HS), Brian Randolph (2010-11, Kell High School), Hutson Mason (2009-10, Lassiter), Branden Smith (2008-09, Booker T. Washington High School) and Tavarres King (2007-08, Habersham Central) 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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