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**BELLEVUE WEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NEBRASKA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 4, 2014) — In its 30<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced C.J. Johnson of Bellevue West High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Nebraska Football Player of the Year. Johnson is the second Gatorade Nebraska Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Bellevue West 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 Johnson as Nebraska's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Johnson 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, 185-pound senior wide receiver hauled in 63 receptions for 1,214 yards and 20 touchdowns this season, leading the Thunderbirds (6-4) to a Class A state playoff berth. Also a prolific kick returner on special teams, Johnson returned four kickoffs for 91 yards and a touchdown as well as seven punts for 131 yards and a score. He owns Class A single-season and career records for receptions and receiving yards in addition to the Class A mark for career receiving touchdowns. Johnson's 3,548 career receiving yards also constitute an all-class state record. The son of 1990-91 Gatorade Football Player of the Year Clester Johnson, he completes the first father-son football combination in the program history, according to Gatorade archives.

Also a basketball standout, Johnson has maintained a 4.55 GPA on a 5.0 scale in the classroom. Twice selected by faculty to attend Bellevue Public Schools' youth leadership retreat, he has also volunteered on behalf of his church, the Open Door Mission, a youth literacy-outreach program and Distributive Education Clubs of America. He also completed a service-mission trip to Chicago.

"We are glad to see him go, because he was the No. 1 factor in beating us the last three years," said Jerry Lovell, head coach of rival Bellevue East. "You had to account for him the whole game, especially on special teams, even though he was fighting through a bad shoulder all year. He's a good kid, too."

Johnson has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Wyoming 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.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Football Players of the Year Harrison Phillips (2013-14, Millard West High School), Isaac Aakre (2012-13, Millard North High School), Drew Ott (2011-12, Giltner High School), Tyson Broekemeier (2010-11, Aurora High School), Bronson Marsh (2009-10, Millard South), Tyrone Sellers (2008-09, McCook High School) and Baker Steinkuhler (2007-08, Lincoln Southwest) 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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