

Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**LAKE NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NORTH CAROLINA 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 Josh Ladowski of Lake Norman High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year. Ladowski is the first Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Lake Norman 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 Ladowski as North Carolina's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Ladowski 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-9, 185-pound senior quarterback has led the Wildcats to a 13-1 record and a berth in the Class 4AA state semifinals, scheduled for Dec. 5. Ladowski threw for 3,368 yards and 39 touchdowns on 196-of-321 passing (61 percent) through 14 games. A returning First Team All-State selection as named by the Associated Press, Ladowski also rushed for 1,887 yards and 32 touchdowns on 285 carries entering the semifinals. With as many as two games to play, he trailed two-time Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year Chris Leak's 12-year-old North Carolina High School Athletic Association state record for total offense in a single season by 239 yards.

Also a baseball standout, Ladowski has maintained a 3.84 weighted GPA in the classroom. In addition to volunteering as a youth football instructor, he has donated his time on behalf of his church, as a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and as part of a care package campaign benefitting U.S. troops. He has also mentored with a special needs student at Lake Norman on a daily basis.

"I have coached against Josh Ladowski for two years, and in my 30 years of coaching, I have honestly never seen a high school player do what this guy can do," said Nick Bazzle, head coach of rival Alexander Central High. "I have coached some great athletes over the years, but none as difficult to defend as him. If there is another player more deserving athletically than Josh Ladowski, I would love to watch him play."

Ladowski has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of North Carolina 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.

Ladowski joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Football Players of the Year Will Grier (2013-14 & 2012-13, Davidson Day School), Keith Marshall (2011-12, Millbrook High School), Stephone Anthony (2010-11, Anson High School), Christian LeMay (2009-10, Butler), Xavier Nixon (2008-09, Jack Britt High School) and Braden Hanson (2007-08, Charlotte Latin School) 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.

###