

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

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

CHICAGO (December 3, 2015) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Mark Evanchick of Darien High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year. Evanchick is the first Gatorade Connecticut Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Darien 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 Evanchick 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, Evanchick 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, 238-pound senior defensive end had led the Blue Wave to a 9-0 record and a berth in the Class LL state quarterfinals against Staples High, scheduled for Dec. 1. At the time of his selection, Evanchick had recorded 64 tackles, 20.5 sacks, 30 tackles for a loss, nine quarterback hurries and forced two fumbles. The state's all-time leader with 63.5 sacks, the two-time Class LL First Team All-State selection has tallied at least three sacks in five games this season.

Evanchick has maintained a 3.34 GPA in the classroom. The Connecticut High School Lacrosse Coaches Association's Defensive Player of the Year as a junior, he has volunteered locally as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit diabetes research and as a youth football and lacrosse coach.

"Mark Evanchick is one of the best defensive linemen I have seen in a long time," said Marce Petroccio, head coach of Staples High. "He has an incredible combination of speed, strength and leverage that reminds me of JJ Watt. He is almost impossible to block."

Evanchick will attend the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2016, where he will play lacrosse.

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.

Evanchick joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Football Players of the Year Zach Allen (2014-15, New Canaan High School), 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 High School), Mike Osiecki (2008-09, Seymour High School) and Alex Thomas (2007-08, Ansonia High 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.

###