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**PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MAINE 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 Joe Esposito of Portland High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Maine Football Player of the Year. Esposito is the third Gatorade Maine Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Portland 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 Esposito as Maine's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Esposito 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-1, 198-pound senior running back and linebacker rushed for 1,795 yards and 26 touchdowns on 256 carries this past season, leading the Bulldogs (10-1) to the Class A state championship game. The Eastern Region Class A Player of the Year, Esposito also caught seven passes for 198 yards and four scores. On defense, the two-time First Team All-Region selection recorded 124 tackles, 1.5 sacks, two fumble recoveries and two interceptions, returning one for a touchdown.

Esposito has maintained an A average in the classroom. A Portland High ambassador for incoming freshmen, he has volunteered locally with the Stuff the Bus food drive and as part of multiple community-service initiatives through his church.

"Joe Esposito was the best player we saw this season," said Mark Soehren, head coach of Oxford Hills High. "He is big, fast and strong. He is fundamentally the best player we played against."

Esposito remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Esposito joins recent Gatorade Maine Football Players of the Year Joe Fitzpatrick (2014-15, Cheverus High School), Ben Lucas (2013-14, Cony High School), Andrew Libby (2012-13, Thornton Academy), Louis DiTomasso (2011-12, Wells High School), Peter Gwilym (2010-11, Cheverus High School), Jack Mallis (2009-10, Windham High School), Jack Heary (2008-09, Deering High School) and Justin Villacci (2007-08, Gorham 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.

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