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**EDEN PRAIRIE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MINNESOTA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 3, 2015) — In its 31<sup>st</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced J.D. Spielman of Eden Prairie High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year. Spielman is the first Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Eden Prairie 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 Spielman as Minnesota's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Spielman 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, 175-pound senior running back and defensive back rushed for 1,259 yards and 19 touchdowns on 102 carries this past season, averaging 12.3 yards per attempt and leading the Eagles (10-1) to the Class 6A quarterfinals. Minnesota's 2015 Mr. Football award winner, Spielman added 63 tackles on defense with four interceptions and three sacks. He is the son of Minnesota Vikings general manager Rick Spielman and the nephew of former NFL standout Chris Spielman.

Spielman has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of Feed My Starving Children and as a youth lacrosse and football coach.

"J.D. Spielman is not only an exceptional athlete but also a tremendous person who represents our school and community with great class," said Eden Prairie High head coach Mike Grant. "He is one of the best players to ever play in Minnesota. His skills and competitive drive separate him from all others. He has great speed and instincts with great natural physical strength. He was the best player on the field every game and Eden Prairie played the toughest schedule in the state."

Spielman has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Nebraska in the fall of 2016.

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.

Spielman joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Football Players of the Year Ryan Schlichte (2014-15, Mankato West High School), Jacques Perra (2013-14, Roseville Area High School), Bridgeport Tusler (2012-13, Osseo Senior High School), Philip Nelson (2011-12, Mankato West High School), Eric Kline (2010-11, Blaine High School), A.J. Tarpley (2009-10, Wayzata High School), Anders Lee (2008-09, Edina High School) and Michael Floyd (2007-08, Cretin-Derham Hall 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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