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**WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Matt Farniok of Washington High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year. Farniok is the seventh Gatorade South Dakota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Washington 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 Farniok as South Dakota's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Farniok 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-6, 315-pound senior tackle led the Warriors to an 11-1 record and the Class 11AAA state title this past season. Farniok helped pave the way for a Washington offense that averaged 35.3 points and 229.4 rushing yards per game. Captain of the Argus Leader Elite 45 team, he has been chosen to play in the 2016 U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

Farniok has maintained a 3.78 GPA in the classroom. A member of his school's student council and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he has volunteered locally on behalf of a homeless shelter and Boys and Girls Clubs of the Sioux Empire.

"Farniok is big, he's strong, he's fast," said John Hodorff, head coach at Watertown High. "He does his job every play and they run behind him an awful lot."

Farniok 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.

Farniok joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Football Players of the Year Luke Loudenburg (2014-15, Howard High School), Caden Quintanilla (2013-14, Lincoln High School), Cole Langer (2012-13, Dell Rapids High School), Alex Schultz (2011-12, Lincoln High School), Matt Hermanson (2010-11, Washington High School), Austin Sumner (2009-10, Brandon Valley High School), Dustin Lotzer (2008-09, Sisseton High School) and Riley Reiff (2007-08, Parkston 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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