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**SOLDOTNA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALASKA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 12, 2016) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Brenner Furlong of Soldotna High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Alaska Football Player of the Year. Furlong is the fifth Gatorade Alaska Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Soldotna 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 Furlong as Alaska's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Collins joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.), Greg Olsen (2002-03, Wayne Hills HS, N.J.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park HS, Texas), Harrison Smith (2006-07 Knoxville Catholic High School, Tenn.), Latavius Murray (2007-08, Onondaga HS, N.Y.), Brock Osweiler (2008-09, Flathead High School, Mont.) and Leonard Fournette (2012-13, 2014-15, St. Augustine HS, La.)

The 5-foot-11, 175-pound junior running back and outside linebacker led the Stars to a 10-0 record and a fifth straight Medium Division state championship this past season. Furlong rushed for 1,439 yards and 15 touchdowns on 173 carries, including 270 yards and five scores in the state title game. The All-State Medium and Small School Offensive Player of the Year, he recorded 37 tackles and one interception as a linebacker for the Stars, who finished the season with an active 49-game win streak intact.

Furlong has maintained a 3.5 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally with the Wounded Warrior Project and as a youth football coach. He has also donated his time as a mentor to a special-needs student at his school.

"Brenner was that athlete that you had to spend valuable time game-planning for," said Dennis Diviney, head coach of North Pole High. "His ability to see the field and make cuts is exemplary. Great burst speed and power makes him the whole package."

Furlong will begin his senior year of high school next fall.

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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Furlong joins recent Gatorade Alaska Football Players of the Year Ethan Falaniko (2015-16, Bartlett High School), Anthony Griffith (2014-15, Ben Eielson High School), Leroy Elliott (2013-14, West Anchorage High School), Conor Feckley (2012-13, West Anchorage High School), A.J. Hull (2011-12, Kenai Central High School), Robbie Smithwick (2010-11, Soldotna High School), and Justin Kauffman (2009-10, West Anchorage High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Furlong will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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.