

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**LAKEVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Wade Sullivan of Lakeville North High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year. Sullivan is the first Gatorade Minnesota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Lakeville North 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 Sullivan as Minnesota'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-9, 179-pound senior running back rushed for 1,900 yards and 31 touchdowns on 311 carries this past season, leading the Panthers (9-2) to the Class 6A state quarterfinals. Sullivan also threw for a touchdown and caught a TD pass this fall. An All-Metro selection as a junior and a state champion wrestler as a freshman, he concluded his prep career with more than 4,000 all-purpose yards and 51 touchdowns.

Sullivan has maintained a 3.64 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally at the Lakeville Art Festival and as a youth football and wrestling coach.

"Wade Sullivan is a tough, physical runner despite not being very big," said Rick Sutton, head coach of Eagan High. "He is as good as anyone I have seen over the last few years at maintaining speed through cuts and change of direction."

Sullivan 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 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.

Sullivan joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Football Players of the Year J.D. Spielman (2015-16, Eden Prairie High School), 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), and A.J. Tarpley (2009-10, Wayzata High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sullivan 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.