

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**WEST FARGO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Brandon Metz of West Fargo High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade North Dakota Football Player of the Year. Metz is the first Gatorade North Dakota Football Player of the Year to be chosen from West Fargo 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 Metz as North Dakota'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 6-foot-2, 265-pound senior offensive lineman and defensive lineman led the Packers to a 10-1 record and the Class 3A semifinals this past season. Metz helped pave the way for a West Fargo offense that averaged 34.2 points per game, while contributing 51 tackles, 5.5 for loss, on a defense that allowed just 10.5 points per contest. The Class 3A Senior Athlete of the Year, Metz also averaged 34.5 yards per punt.

Metz has maintained a B average in the classroom. Also a talented singer and a state championship wrestler, he has served as class president and as an elementary school mentor.

"Brandon Metz literally did everything for that team; he never left the field," said Jeremy Newton, head coach at Sheyenne High. "He's a relentless athlete who is very competitive and shows good sportsmanship. They always put him in the spot where they needed him to make plays."

Metz has verbally committed to continue wrestling as well as play football on scholarship at North Dakota State University beginning in the fall of 2017.

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.

Metz joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Football Players of the Year Dalton Feeney (2015-16, Century High School), James Johannesson (2014-15 & 2013-14, Fargo South High School), Layne Johs (2012-13, Bismarck High School), Devin Coyle (2011-12, Mandan High School), Connor McGovern (2010-11, Shanley High School), and Esley Thorton (2009-10, Bismarck High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Metz 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.