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**GATORADE® NATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR:
JACOB EASON**

Super Bowl XLVIII champion Bobby Wagner Surprises Standout with Elite Honor

Lake Stevens, Wash. (December 15, 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 Jacob Eason of Lake Stevens High School (Lake Stevens, Wash.) as its 2015-16 Gatorade National Football Player of the Year. Eason was surprised with the news at school by Super Bowl XLVIII champion Bobby Wagner.

“Jacob really deserves to be this year’s Gatorade National Football Player of the Year because he embodies everything the award stands for,” said Wagner. “Not only has Jacob excelled on the field, but he’s also a stellar student and is a positive influence in the community. I’m excited to follow his career and watch all the things he will accomplish in the future.”

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 Eason as the nation’s best high school football player. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select Eason from more than 1 million high school football players nationwide. Eason is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Male High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The 6-foot-6, 220-pound senior quarterback completed 235-of-338 passes for 3,585 yards and 43 touchdowns against just six interceptions this past season, leading the Vikings (12-1) to the Class 4A semifinals. A national Elite 11 quarterback camp invitee and ranked as the nation’s No. 16 recruit in the ESPN 300, Eason has been selected to play in the 2016 U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

Eason has maintained a 3.83 GPA in the classroom. He is an active member of his Holy Cross Catholic Church community, he has volunteered with the Never Ever Give Up foundation, helping to ensure children fighting cancer get the support and resources they need, in addition to visiting with patients. He has also donated his time as the coordinator and head coach for quarterbacks at the Vikings Junior Football Camp and as a four-year instructor at the Vikings Passing Academy.

“Eason has the fastest release I have ever seen,” said Kai Smalley, head coach at Snohomish High. “It is actually very deceiving if you aren’t watching him for a long time. He makes such quick and correct reads, then has the ability to get rid of the ball with great mechanics. For being as long as he is, you would think he would have a long release but it happens so quickly, it’s nearly impossible for a high school defensive back to get a break on the ball.”

“Without question, Jacob is deserving of recognition as the nation’s best high school football player based on his statistics on the field and the impact his accomplishments have had on Lake Stevens’ success,” said Gatorade Chief Marketing Officer Morgan Flatley. “But he is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young athletes of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. He represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient.”

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.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- 2015 NBA first overall pick Karl-Anthony Towns
- Three-time WNBA champion Maya Moore
- Four-time track & field gold medalist Allyson Felix
- Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at <http://www.gatorade.com/poy>, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

All-Time Gatorade National Football Players of the Year

As of December 15, 2015

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>HIGH SCHOOL</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
2015-16	Jacob Eason	QB	Lake Stevens HS, Lake Stevens, WA	High School Senior
2014-15	Kyler Murray	QB	Allen HS, Allen, TX	Texas A&M University
2013-14	Andrew Brown	DT/OT	Oscar Smith, Chesapeake, VA	University of Virginia
2012-13	Max Browne	QB	Skyline HS, Sammamish, WA	Univ. of Southern California
2011-12	Johnathan Gray	RB	Aledo, Aledo, TX	University of Texas
2010-11	Justin Worley	QB	Northwestern, Rock Hill, SC	NFL Free Agent
2009-10	Malcolm Jones	RB/LB	Oaks Christian, Westlake Village, CA	NFL Free Agent
2008-09	Garrett Gilbert	QB	Lake Travis, Austin, TX	Oakland Raiders
2007-08	Matt Barkley	QB	Mater Dei, Santa Ana, CA	Arizona Cardinals
2006-07	John Brantley	QB	Trinity Catholic, Ocala, FL	NFL Free Agent
2005-06	Mitch Mustain	QB	Springdale, Springdale, AR	AFL/NFL Free Agent
2004-05	Greg Paulus	QB	Christian Brothers Academy, Syracuse, NY	Ohio State Coaching Staff
2003-04	Jeff Byers	C/DT	Loveland, Loveland, CO	Retired from NFL
2002-03	Kyle Wright	QB	Monte Vista, Danville, CA	NFL Free Agent
2001-02	Lorenzo Booker	RB	St. Bonaventure, Ventura, CA	NFL Free Agent
2000-01	Joe Mauer	QB	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	Minnesota Twins
1999-00	Brock Berlin	QB	Evangel Christian Academy, Shreveport, LA	Retired from NFL
1998-99	Chris Lewis	QB	Long Beach Polytechnic, Long Beach, CA	Retired from NFL Europe
1997-98	Ronald Curry	QB	Hampton, Hampton, VA	San Francisco 49ers Staff
1996-97	Travis Minor	RB	Catholic, Baton Rouge, LA	Retired from NFL
1995-96	Tim Couch	QB	Leslie County High, Hyden, KY	Retired from NFL
1994-95	Brock Huard	QB	Puyallup, Puyallup, WA	Retired from NFL
1993-94	Peyton Manning	QB	Isidore Newman, New Orleans, LA	Denver Broncos
1992-93	Ron Powlus	QB	Berwick, Berwick, PA	Univ. of Notre Dame Staff
1991-92	Chris Walsh	QB	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	Retired from NFL
1990-91	Marquette Smith	RB	Winter Park, Lake Howell, FL	Retired from NFL
1989-90	Robert Smith	RB	Euclid, Euclid, OH	Retired from NFL
1988-89	Terry Kirby	RB	Tabb, Tabb, VA	Retired from NFL
1987-88	Curtis Bray	LB	Gateway Senior, Monroeville, PA	Deceased
1986-87	Emmitt Smith	RB	Escambia, Pensacola, FL	Retired from NFL
1985-86	Jeff George	QB	Warren Central, Indianapolis, IN	Retired from NFL

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