

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Gatorade<sup>®</sup> Recognizes Colorado Football Standout  
With Its National Player of the Year Award**

*Byers becomes first lineman to win in award's 19-year history*

**Loveland, Colo.** (December 11, 2003) – In its 19<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's elite high school athletes, Gatorade<sup>®</sup> Thirst Quencher, in partnership with *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director* magazine, today announced **Jeff Byers** of Loveland High School in Loveland, Colo., as the **2003 Gatorade National High School Football Player of the Year**.

The award, which recognizes athletic achievement as well as the academic performance and overall character of its recipient, distinguishes Jeff as the nation's best high school football player. The Gatorade National Advisory Board, a group of sportswriters and sport-specific experts from around the country, selected Jeff from the more than one million high school football players nationwide.

Rated by many scouting services as the country's top center, Jeff paved the way for Loveland's running attack and did not allow a sack in three years as a starter. Defensively, he recorded 203 tackles in his senior season, 97 of them solo and 55 of them for a loss. In addition, he racked up 10 sacks and forced 14 fumbles, one of which he returned 75 yards for a touchdown in Loveland's 50-0 state semifinal victory. Jeff capped off his high school career by leading Loveland High School to the Colorado 4A state championship, the school's sixth overall and its second during his four years on the varsity.

"Jeff is the rare individual who can absolutely dominate the game as a lineman. He gives us a lot of flexibility on both sides of the ball because his abilities make you feel like you're working with two or three extra players," said Loveland Head Coach John Poovey. "He will also be the first person to tell you that we had other great players on this team, but without question he was our leader and he proved it every day through both his intensity and his actions."

-- more --

Academically, Jeff maintains a 3.92 GPA and is member of the National Honor Society. He is also a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, DECA and the basketball and track teams.

“Jeff’s accomplishments on the field this season certainly place him among the nation’s elite high school athletes,” said Gatorade Senior Vice President of Sports Marketing Tom Fox. “But his excellence in the classroom and contributions to his school make him a true champion and someone we are proud to call a Gatorade National Player of the Year.”

The Gatorade High School Player of the Year program recognizes one winner in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and awards one National Player of the Year in football, baseball, softball, volleyball, and boys’ and girls’ basketball, soccer, and track & field. Previous winners include Emmitt Smith, Marion Jones, Peyton Manning, Lisa Leslie and Alex Rodriguez.

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information a list of upcoming announcement dates, or the names of previous winners, visit [www.gatorade.com](http://www.gatorade.com).

###

**PAST GATORADE NATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONOREES**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>High School/Hometown</b>	<b>Status</b>
2003	Jeff Byers	Loveland, Loveland, CO	High School Senior
2002	Kyle Wright	Monte Vista, Danville, CA	University of Miami (Fla.)
2001	Lorenzo Booker	St. Bonaventure, Ventura, CA	Florida State University
2000	Joe Mauer	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	Minnesota Twins Org.
1999	Brock Berlin	Evangel Christian, Shreveport, LA	University of Miami (Fla.)
1998	Chris Lewis	Polytechnic, Long Beach, CA	Stanford University
1997	Ronald Curry	Hampton, Hampton, VA	Oakland Raiders
1996	Travis Minor	Catholic, Baton Rouge, LA	Miami Dolphins
1995	Tim Couch	Leslie County, Hyden, KY	Cleveland Browns
1994	Brock Huard	Puyallup, Puyallup, WA	Indianapolis Colts
1993	Peyton Manning	Newman, New Orleans, LA	Indianapolis Colts
1992	Ron Powlus	Berwick, Berwick, PA	Retired from NFL
1991	Chris Walsh	Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN	U. of Minnesota Graduate
1990	Marquette Smith	Winter Park, Lake Howell, FL	Retired from NFL
1989	Robert Smith	Euclid, Euclid, OH	Retired from NFL
1988	Terry Kirby	Tabb, Tabb, VA	Retired from NFL
1987	Curtis Bray	Gateway, Monroeville, PA	U. of Pittsburgh Coach
1986	Emmitt Smith	Escambia, Pensacola, FL	Arizona Cardinals
1985	Jeff George	Warren Central, Indianapolis, IN	Retired from NFL