

**TOLMAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Luis Blanco of Tolman High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Blanco is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Tolman 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 Blanco as Rhode Island's best high school boys soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Blanco joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook High School, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel High School, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy School of Young Women, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick High School, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-04, Blue Valley West High School, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire High School, Mass.) and Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista High School, Colo.).

The 5-foot-9, 145-pound senior forward led the Tigers to a 14-0-4 record and the Division I state championship this past season. Blanco recorded 19 goals and nine assists, including a scoring streak of 10 straight games. Also a United Soccer Coaches All-American selection, Blanco was the Rhode Island Soccer Coaches Association State Player of the Year in his only season playing high school soccer, having exclusively played club soccer prior to 2018-19.

Blanco has volunteered locally at The Miriam Hospital in Rhode Island, and has donated his time to community beautification projects and as a youth soccer coach. "Luis Blanco was the most impactful player in the state this year," said Don Denham, head coach of Barrington High. "He is an incredible talent."

Blanco has maintained a weighted 3.22 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Franklin Pierce University this 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Blanco joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jon Sherman (2017-18, South Kingstown High School), Poom Mera (2016-17, Moses Brown School), Stavros Zarokostas (2015-16, La Salle Academy), Leandro Alves (2014-15, Shea High School) and Komla Dogbey (2013-14, Hope High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Blanco also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [www.Gatorade.com/POY](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).