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**SPRINGDALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jose Vega of Springdale High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Vega is the second Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Springdale 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 Vega as Arkansas' 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, Vega joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel HS, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick HS, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-04, Blue Valley West HS, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire HS, Mass.), Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista HS, Colo.).

The 5-foot-7, 150-pound junior forward scored 30 goals and passed for six assists this past season, leading the Bulldogs (19-2-1) to the Class 7A state tournament semifinals. Vega recorded 10 multi-goal games, including five hat tricks. A two-time First Team All-State selection, he concluded his junior year with 46 goals and 19 assists in his prep soccer career.

Vega moved to the United States from El Salvador in 2013 without knowing any English. He has volunteered locally with the Hispanic Women's Organization and as a youth soccer coach. "Jose is great with the ball at his feet, comfortable with his back to the goal and willing to sacrifice his body to get into a position of scoring," said Steve Peck, head coach of Rogers High. "He's a dangerous and technically skilled player."

Vega has maintained a 3.19 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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. 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.

Vega joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jose 'Lalo' Castro (2016-17, Bentonville High School), Brady Rosenow (2015-16, Conway High School), Chris Holmes (2014-15 & 2013-14, Catholic High School for Boys), Wes Carson (2012-13, SoutHigh Schoolide High School), Nelson Landaverde (2011-12, Springdale High School), William Hidalgo (2010-11, Cabot High School), John Lung'aho (2009-10, Parkview Arts/Science Magnet), Taylor Hart (2008-09, Conway High School), Stephen Maxwell (2007-08, Conway), and Jeff Chacko (2006-07, Catholic School for Boys) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Vega 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 us on Twitter. 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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