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**NAPERVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 Tommy Welch of Naperville North High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Welch is the fifth Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Naperville North 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 Welch as Illinois' 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, Welch 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 6-foot-6, 215-pound junior goalkeeper led the Huskies to a 27-1-1 record and a second-straight Class 3A state championship this past season. Welch recorded 19 shutouts and allowed just 0.38 goals per game. He blanked the opposition in all seven of Naperville North's postseason games, including a 14-save effort en route to a 1-0 win over Libertyville High in the state final. A two-time First Team All-State selection, he concluded his junior year with 29 shutouts and two state titles in his prep soccer career.

A Division I basketball recruit, Welch was selected to participate in the J. Kyle Braid Experiential Education Foundation that trains students to be leaders at their schools. "The Naperville North team was extremely talented this year, but they don't win the state title without Tommy Welch," said Josh Robinson, head coach of Metea Valley High. "It's hyperbolic, but he is one of the best high school goalkeepers I have ever seen."

Welch has maintained a weighted 3.85 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.

Welch joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Players of the Year Chris Sullivan (2016-17, Naperville North High School), Ty Seager (2015-16 & 2014-15, Wheaton Academy), Mike Catalano (2013-14, Lake Park High School), Brandon Medina (2012-13, St. Ignatius College Prep.), Drew Conner (2011-12, Cary-Grove High School), Vince Ciccirelli (2010-11, Peoria Notre Dame High School), Bryan Ciesiulka (2009-10, Neuqua Valley High School), Tim Zimmer (2008-09, Naperville Central High School), John Shakon (2007-08, Hinsdale Central High School), and Anthony Colaizzi (2006-07, Warren Township High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Welch 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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