

**LEWISTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Bilal Hersi of Lewiston High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Hersi is the second Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Lewiston 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 Hersi as Maine'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, Hersi 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 6-foot-2, 170-pound junior midfielder and forward scored 22 goals and passed for 10 assists this past season, leading the Blue Devils (16-0-2) to the Class A state championship. A United Soccer Coaches All-American, Hersi was also a First Team All-State selection, the Kennebec Valley Athletic Conference Player of the Year and the Lewiston Sun Journal Player of the Year.

Hersi has volunteered locally as an Islamic studies teacher and a youth soccer coach. "Bilal Hersi is an outstanding player and also a leader for his team," said Jack Rioux, head coach at Mt. Ararat High School. "Even when you keep him from scoring, he has such a big impact on the game because he makes everyone around him better."

Hersi has maintained a B-plus average 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. 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.

Hersi joins recent Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Players of the Year Michael Tahiru (2017-18, Hebron Academy), Carson Atherley (2016-17, Bangor High School), Abdi Shariff-Hassan (2015-16, Lewiston High School), Stephen Ochan (2014-15, Deering High School) and Wyatt Omsberg (2013-14, Scarborough High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hersi 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.