

## **THE HEIGHTS SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MARYLAND 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 **Daniel Diaz-Bonilla of The Heights School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Maryland Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Diaz-Bonilla is the first Gatorade Maryland Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from The Heights 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 Diaz-Bonilla as Maryland'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, Diaz-Bonilla 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-11, 170-pound senior midfielder led the Cavaliers to a 17-0-1 record and the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference tournament championship this past season. Diaz-Bonilla tallied 27 goals and 16 assists, including a score in The Heights' 3-0 win over Paul VI High in the WCAC title game. The WCAC Player of the Year, Diaz-Bonilla was a Washington Post First Team All-Met selection and participated in the High School All-American Game in Orlando in December.

The oldest of 10 children, Diaz-Bonilla spends much of his free time helping take care of his siblings. He has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Daniel was a dominant player in the WCAC this past season," said Chris Jennings, head coach of Bishop O'Connell High. "He is very good running at people in 1v1 situations. In terms of technical ability he's one of the best around."

Diaz-Bonilla has maintained a weighted 4.39 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to attend Princeton University, where he will play soccer, beginning 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.

Diaz-Bonilla joins recent Gatorade Maryland Boys Soccer Players of the Year Justin Gielen (2017-18, DeMatha Catholic High School), Nick Richardson (2016-17, Archbishop Curley High School), Michael DeShields (2015-16, McDonogh School), Connor Smith (2014-15, McDonogh School) and George Campbell (2013-14, McDonogh School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Diaz-Bonilla 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).

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