

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Jeremie Benson of Washington High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Benson is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Washington 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 Benson as South Dakota'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, Benson 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, 155-pound junior defensive center and midfielder led the Warriors to a 12-1-3 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Benson scored three goals and anchored a defense that allowed just one goal in four postseason games. Named the Defensive Player of the Match in the state title game, he was a First Team All-State selection.

A native of Liberia who arrived in the United States in 2015, Benson has volunteered locally as a school ambassador and with Collision of Sioux Falls, a non-profit student empowerment organization. "Jeremie has a demanding presence on the pitch with his size and his abilities on the ball," said Brice Holiday, head coach of O'Gorman High. "He is a very quality player that can have a huge impact on a team and game."

Benson has maintained a B 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.

Benson joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Soccer Players of the Year Isaac Woods (2017-18, Lincoln High School), Marcus Hluchy (2016-17 & 2015-16, Aberdeen Central High School), and Lee Wynja (2014-15 & 2013-14, Sioux Falls Christian High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Benson 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.