

**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Joseph Biafora of University High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Biafora is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from University 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 Biafora as West Virginia'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, Biafora 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, 180-pound senior forward scored 49 goals and passed for 13 assists this past season, leading the Hawks (21-1-1) to the Class AAA semifinals. The West Virginia Sports Writers Association Player of the Year, Biafora is a three-time All-State honoree and was selected as Class AAA Player of the Year by the West Virginia High School Soccer Coaches Association.

A math tutor at his school, Biafora has volunteered locally assisting the elderly and coaching youth soccer players. "Joe Biafora is one of the best players our state has ever had," said Sam Snyder, head coach of Morgantown High. "He works incredibly hard, he's terrific on the ball and he can create chances from the smallest opening."

Biafora has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at West Virginia University 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.

Biafora joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Players of the Year Seth Jordan (2017-18 & 2016-17, Nitro High School), Addison Luck (2015-16 & 2014-15, Morgantown High School), and Garrett Phillips (2013-14, George Washington High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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