

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

CHICAGO (June 8, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Bilal Hersi of Lewiston High School as its 2019-20 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 state award-winners in 12 sports, 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 (2004-05, 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 senior midfielder and forward scored 32 goals and passed for 13 assists this past season, leading the Blue Devils (15-2-1) to the Class A state championship game. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Soccer Player of the Year, Hersi is a two-time United Soccer Coaches All-American. He was also a First Team All-State selection, the Kennebec Valley Athletic Conference Player of the Year, the Maine Sunday Telegram Player of the Year, the Maine Soccer Coaches Player of the Year and played in December's High School All-American Game.

Hersi has volunteered locally as an Islamic studies teacher and a youth soccer coach. "Bilal has an unbelievable work ethic on the field and he plays with incredible pace," said Tim Mains, head coach at Edward Little High School. "He's made himself better every year and he continues to make his teammates better as well."

Hersi has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Siena University.

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.

Two-time winner 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.

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.

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