

**SIMLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 12, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Elvis Hernandez Paz of Simley High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their excellence in sport, academics and community. The award recognizes Hernandez Paz as Minnesota’s best high school boys soccer player, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Alecko Eskandarian (1999-00, Bergen Catholic High School, New Jersey), Cristian Roldan (2012-13, El Rancho High School, California) and Dan Klink (2024-25, Loyola Blakefield, Maryland).

The 5-foot-9, 160-pound senior defender led the Spartans to a 14-2-3 record and the Class 2A semifinals this past season. Hernandez Paz scored 23 goals and passed for 19 assists, playing a role in more than 78 percent of the team’s total goals. Improbably, as a center-back who anchors the defenses, Hernandez Paz owns the school records for career assists (44) and goals (60). The Class 2A Mr. Soccer honoree, he is a two-time First Team All-State selection and received 2025-26 United Soccer Coaches All-Region recognition.

Hernandez Paz has donated his time as a coach for middle school and club youth soccer teams. He has also volunteered locally by delivering meals and supplies to families in need. “Not only is Elvis a very good player, he makes the difference when it matters in big games,” said Russ Turner, head coach of Cretin-Derham Hall High School. “We went head-to-head with Simley in the Section final and I am convinced we would have prevailed if it hadn’t been for Elvis’s contributions.”

Hernandez Paz has maintained a 3.18 GPA in the classroom. He will matriculate at Whitworth University (Wash.) this fall, where he will play soccer.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one state winner from each of the 50 states and Washington D.C., in 12 different sports: football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls track & field. In total, 610 high school athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the winners in each sport.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$6.4 million in grants to winners across more than 2,200 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X (Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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