

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

DEARBORN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE® MICHIGAN BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 18, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced **Soony Saad of Dearborn High School** as its **2009-10 Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Saad is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Dearborn 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 Saad as Michigan'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 May, Saad joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Tony Meola (1986-87, Kearney HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-9, 165-pound senior forward set a state record with 76 goals and also recorded 15 assists this past season, leading the Pioneers (18-2-2) to the Division 1 state tournament round of 16. A First Team All-American selection by ESPN RISE and a National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-American honoree, Saad was the 2009 U.S. Soccer Federation Development Academy Player of the Year. The Michigan Soccer Coaches Association's Mr. Soccer for 2009, Saad concluded his high school career with a state-record 172 goals along with 51 assists.

Saad has maintained a 3.44 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Youth Muslim Association and the Muslim American Youth Association, he has volunteered at multiple charity events in association with those organizations.

"Once every 10 or 20 years, someone comes through Michigan with his kind of ability," said Lars Richters, head coach of rival Livonia Stevenson High. "Soony Saad has been the best player in Michigan since he was five years old. He's a very intelligent player, he seems to be a step ahead of the game in terms of thinking. The unique skill he has is that he's a great goal-scorer, that being the toughest technique of the whole sport."

Saad has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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. The selection process is administered by ESPN RISE and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Saad joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Players of the Year Kevin Cope (2008-09, Salem) and Casey Townsend (2007-08 & 2006-07, Traverse City West) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners, and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

###