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**TOTINO-GRACE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA 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 Paul Yonga of Totino-Grace High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Player of the Year.

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 Yonga as Minnesota'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, Yonga 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 state's returning Gatorade Boys Soccer Player of the Year, Yonga recorded 16 goals and 17 assists this past season, leading the Eagles (18-4-1) to a third-place finish in Class A. An All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, the 5-foot-11 senior midfielder is a three-time member of the All-State team. Yonga was also named Mr. Soccer for Class A in 2009 and was named First Team All-Metro by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* for the second consecutive season.

Yonga has maintained a 3.44 GPA in the classroom. A member of his school's Positive Peer Leadership Program, he has volunteered on behalf of a local food bank.

"Yonga is the one player I've coached against who can have an impact on the game all by himself," said Joe Quintaville, head coach of rival Woodberry High. "He's very strong on the ball and in the air, and he has great vision of the field."

Yonga has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Wisconsin 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.

Yonga joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Players of the Year Keidoe Pour (2007-08, Saint Bernard's School) and Abe Gibbons (2006-07, South) 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.

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