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**ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® VERMONT BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 23, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Paul Bianchi of Essex High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Bianchi is the fourth Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Essex 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 Bianchi as Vermont'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, Bianchi 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-11 senior forward led the Hornets to a 14-4 record and the Division I state title this past season. Bianchi recorded 21 goals and four assists and was an All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. He was also named First Team All-Metro for the third consecutive season and was selected First Team All-State by the Burlington Free Press for the second straight season.

Bianchi has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of a soccer program for children with special needs.

"Bianchi has great anticipation and strong skills," said Jamie McKenny, head coach of rival North Country Union High. "He's one of the top finishers in the state, and his field knowledge was the best I saw this year."

Bianchi has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of New Hampshire.

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.

Bianchi joins recent Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Players of the Year Andrew Mercier (2009-10, South Burlington) Rob Cole (2008-09, South Burlington), and Tyler Macnee (2007-08, Champlain Valley Union) 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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