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**AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL OF BOCA/DELRAY STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® FLORIDA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 10, 2011) — In its 26<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Verner Valimaa of American Heritage School of Boca/Delray as its 2010-11 Gatorade Florida Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Valimaa is the second Gatorade Florida Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from American Heritage School of Boca/Delray.

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 Valimaa as Florida'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, Valimaa 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.), Tony Meola (1986-87, Kearney HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-8, 152-pound senior midfielder led the Stallions to a 21-2-1 record and the Class 2A state championship this past season. Valimaa scored 32 goals and passed for 18 assists. A member of the U.S. Soccer Federation Under-18 Men's National Team, he also holds a roster spot with the Under-20 Men's National Team for his native Finland. Valimaa was the 2011 *Sun-Sentinel* Player of the Year and concluded his prep soccer career with 72 goals and 65 assists.

Valimaa has maintained a 3.66 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honor Society, he has participated in school math competitions and has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach.

"Verner Valimaa has been looked at widely on an international level," said Jerry Willenborg, the Director of Florida's Weston Football Club. "For our club, he's a difference maker, he sticks out. He can break down defensive players and score goals. Sometimes the goals he scores are unbelievable."

Valimaa has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at George Mason University in Virginia 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.

Valimaa joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Soccer Players of the Year Max Rockwell (2009-10, JW Mitchell), Hasani Sinclair (2008-09, American Heritage School of Boca/Delray), and Shawn Barry (2007-08, American Heritage School) 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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