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**ST. BENEDICT'S PREP. STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 22, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Christiano Francois of St. Benedict's Prep. as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Francois is the fifth Gatorade New Jersey Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Benedict's Prep..

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 Francois as New Jersey'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, Francois joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-7, 140-pound senior forward led the Gray Bees to a 24-0 record and the New Jersey Prep A state championship this past season. Francois scored 44 goals and passed for 22 assists, including a goal and an assist in a 4-1 win over Pennington School in the state final. The 2011 Newark Star Ledger New Jersey Prep Player of the Year, Francois is a two-time First Team Prep All-State selection. He concluded his two seasons at St. Benedict's with 60 goals and 41 assists.

Francois has maintained a B average in the classroom. A refugee from Haiti who came to the United States two years ago, he has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and on behalf of the Special Olympics in addition to serving as a gospel singer in his church choir.

"Christiano Francois is a fabulous player. His speed and technical ability make him as dynamic as any player I have seen in New Jersey over the last decade," said Ryan Spring, head coach of Blair Academy. "He is a tireless worker who is constantly making runs, finding space and creating opportunities for himself and his teammates."

Francois has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at the University of Maryland 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 ESPNHS 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.

Francois joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Boys Soccer Players of the Year Dan Metzger (2010 - 11, Holmdel High School), Jon Aguirre, (2009-10, Madison High School), Rafael Diaz (2008-09 Morris Hills), Matt Kassel (2007-08, Bridgewater-Raritan) and Brayan Martinez (2006-2007, West Orange) 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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