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**LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MAINE BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 19, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Matt Saunders of Lawrence High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Saunders is the first Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Lawrence 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 Saunders as Maine'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, Saunders 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-11, 170-pound senior forward scored 19 goals and passed for five assists this past season, leading the Bulldogs (5-8-3) to the Eastern Maine Class A quarterfinals. The Kennebec Valley Athletic Conference and Morning Sentinel Player of the Year, Saunders was named a Scholar All-America by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. He is also a two-time All-State competitor and was an All-New England selection by the NSCAA.

Saunders has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of Big Brother Big Sisters of America and the Waterville Area Humane Society.

"Saunders plays the game the right way," said Ben Poland, head coach at Brewer High. "As skilled as he is individually, he's just as interested in setting his teammates up to succeed."

Saunders will attend the United States Naval Academy this fall, where he will play soccer.

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 the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Saunders joins recent Gatorade Maine Boys Soccer Players of the Year Robby Lentine (2011-12, Windham High School), Fazal Nabi (2010-11, Portland High School), Gabe Hoffman-Johnson, (2009-10 & 2008-09 Falmouth High School), Oliver Blum (2007-08, Greely), and Jordan Hale (2006-2007, Falmouth) 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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