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**CM RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MONTANA 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 Nick Downs of CM Russell High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Downs is the second Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from CM Russell 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 Downs as Montana'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, Downs 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 returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-8, 155-pound senior forward scored 12 goals and passed for eight assists this past season, leading the Rustlers (8-5-2) to the Class AA state semifinals. A three-time All-State selection and the 2012 National Soccer Coaches Association of America State Player of the Year, Downs is already a member of the CMR Hall of Fame. He concluded his prep soccer career with 44 goals and 23 assists.

Downs has maintained a 3.54 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally with the Wounded Warrior project, serving the needs of wounded veterans. He also founded the Kick for Nick program, offering his skills as a soccer coach in exchange for donated soccer balls sent to children in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Nick Downs is by far the best all-around player in the state," said Eric Zahler, head coach of Butte High. "This year he expanded his talent as a distributor, not just as a goal scorer. He is very dangerous from any position on the field."

Downs has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro 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 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.

Downs joins Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Players of the Year Anthony Keene (2010-11, Billings West High School), Zach Moyers, (2009-10, Billings West High School), Jack Pueringer (2008-09 Billings West), Garion Holian (2007-08, Hellgate), and Adam Clinch (2006-2007, Capital) 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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