

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

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

CHICAGO (February 11, 2016) — In its 31th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Johnny Antunes of St. Benedict's Prep as its 2015-16 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Antunes is the sixth 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 Antunes 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, Antunes 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, 155-pound senior midfielder led the Gray Bees to an 18-0 record and their 27th consecutive Prep A state championship this past season. Antunes scored five goals and passed for 19 assists. A three-time Prep A First Team All-State selection, he attended U.S. Soccer Youth National Team training camps as a seventh- and eighth-grader and is rated as the No. 70 recruit in the Class of 2016 by College Soccer News.

Antunes has maintained a 3.25 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally at a food bank, a homeless shelter and as a peer mentor. He has also donated his time as a youth soccer coach.

"Johnny Antunes was the talisman and heart of an exceptional Benedict's team," said Matt Gnall, head coach of Blair Academy. "He is incredibly physical and imposing as a two-way player. He has been playing at such a high level for so long that he responds so quickly and innately to the challenges of a given game."

Antunes has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at Monmouth University beginning 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.

Antunes joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Boys Soccer Players of the Year Brian Hawkins (2014-15, Notre Dame High School), James Murphy (2013-14, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School), Brian Costa (2012-13, Pingry School), Christiano Francois (2011-12, St. Benedict's Prep. School), Dan Metzger (2010-11, Holmdel High School), Jon Aguirre, (2009-10, Madison High School), Rafael Diaz (2008-09, Morris Hills High School), Matt Kassel (2007-08, Bridgewater-Raritan High School), and Brayan Martinez (2006-07, West Orange High 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

###