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**FRANKLIN ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Nick Hughes of Franklin Academy as its 2015-16 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Hughes is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Franklin Academy.

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 Hughes as North Carolina'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, Hughes 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 6-foot-4, 170-pound senior forward and midfielder led the Patriots to a 22-1-2 record and the Class 1A state championship this past season. Hughes scored 59 goals and passed for 14 assists, tallying 16 goals in six postseason matches. A three-time First Team All-North Central Athletic Conference selection, he was named the Class 1A State Tournament MVP after notching a hat trick in a 3-1 victory over Community School of Davidson in the title game.

Hughes has maintained a weighted 4.06 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He has volunteered locally at a food pantry and as a youth soccer coach in addition to donating his time to multiple community-service initiatives through his church youth group.

"Nick Hughes is like an engine—he seemed as if he never was tired," said Jonathan Jacobs, head coach of Hobbton High. "He was everywhere on the field. If he wasn't winning headers in the midfield, he was winning headers in his half and scoring goals at will."

Hughes will attend the University of North Carolina at Charlotte 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.

Hughes joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Players of the Year Clayton Sparks (2014-15, Jacksonville High School), Austin Stamey (2013-14, T.C. Roberson High School), Ade Taiwo (2012-13, Cardinal Gibbons High School), Jonathan Campbell (2011-12, Greensboro Day School), Cooper Vandermaas-Peeler (2010-11, Athens Drive High School), Teddy Mullin, (2009-10, Jordan High School), Ben Newnam (2008-09, East Forsyth High School), Watt Williams (2007-08, Broughton High School), and Clint Irwin (2006-07, Charlotte Christian 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.

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