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**RICE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Leland Gazo of Rice Memorial High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Gazo is the first Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Rice Memorial 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 Gazo as Vermont'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, Gazo 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-1, 180-pound senior goalkeeper recorded seven shutouts this past season, leading the Green Knights (16-2) to the Division 1 state championship. An All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Gazo was also named the Burlington Free Press Player of the Year and the Lake Division Player of the Year.

Gazo has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of a retirement home, youth soccer teams and the U.S. Youth Soccer TOPSoccer program serving young athletes with disabilities.

"Gazo commands the box very well and he's strong in the air," said Reeves Livesay, head coach at Middlebury High. "He's confident, understands the game and he's a vocal leader on the field. He was, by far, the best goalie we faced all year."

Gazo remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Gazo joins recent Gatorade Vermont Boys Soccer Players of the Year Aiman Ginawi (2014-15, South Burlington High School), Zack Evans (2013-14, Champlain Valley Union High School), Shane Haley (2012-13, Champlain Valley Union High School), Jack Shea (2011-12, U-32 High School), Paul Bianchi (2010-11, Essex High School), Andrew Mercier, (2009-10, South Burlington High School), Rob Cole (2008-09, South Burlington High School), Tyler Macnee (2007-08, Champlain Valley Union High School), and Andy Borah (2006-07, Champlain Valley Union 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.

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