

BLACKSBURG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 16, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Edric Zhang of Blacksburg High School is the 2022-23 Gatorade Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Zhang is the first Gatorade Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Blacksburg 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 Zhang as Virginia’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 June, Zhang joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ben Bender (2019-20, Calvert Hall College High School, Md.), Jacob Shaffelburg (2017-18, Berkshire School, Mass.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire School, Mass.) and Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-9, 160-pound senior midfielder scored nine goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading the Bruins (18-2) to the Class 4 State Tournament quarterfinals. The 2022 River Ridge District Player of the Year and a two-time All-Region 4D selection, Zhang was invited to train with the U.S. Soccer Under-14, Under-15 and Under-16 national teams in three consecutive summers. Having previously only played club soccer, he concluded his two-year prep soccer career with 12 goals and 17 assists.

In the summer of 2022, Zhang was selected to participate in the Virginia Aerospace Science and Technology Scholars Summer Camp fully funded by NASA. A research intern in Virginia Tech’s College of Engineering, he has volunteered locally as the manager of the Blacksburg High School store. He has also donated his time on behalf of a food pantry and as a youth soccer coach. “We never had an answer for Edric’s speed, creativity and ability,” said Dave Atkins, head coach of Salem High School. “He has a rare combination of physical size, speed and skill on the ball that make him very hard to defend.”

Zhang has maintained a weighted 4.66 GPA in the classroom. He will attend Princeton 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Zhang joins recent Gatorade Virginia Boys Soccer Players of the Year Parker Sloan (2021-22, Powhatan High School), Malcolm Brickhouse (2020-21, Charlottesville High School), Michael Meese (2019-20, Jamestown High School), and Clay Obara (2018-19, Frank W. Cox High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade’s Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade’s social impact partners, supporting Gatorade’s ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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