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SAM HOUSTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE TEXAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 12, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jose Ortiz of Sam Houston High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Texas Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Ortiz is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Sam Houston 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 Ortiz as Texas'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, Ortiz joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel HS, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick HS, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-04, Blue Valley West HS, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire HS, Mass.), Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista HS, Colo.).

The 5-foot-7, 135-pound freshman forward scored 30 goals and passed for eight assists this past season, leading the Texans (22-3-2) to the Class 6A state championship game. Ortiz scored the game-winning goal in overtime in the regional semifinals and followed with a goal and the game-winning overtime assist in the regional title game. The District 4-6A MVP and the Dallas Morning News Newcomer of the Year, he injured his ankle during warmups before the state semifinals and had to sit out Sam Houston's final two games of the year.

A member of his local chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Ortiz has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank, and as a peer mentor. "Jose has tremendous technical ability, especially for a freshman," said Jeff Waldrop, head coach of Arlington High School. "He has a knack for goal scoring. Players like Jose don't come along very often."

Ortiz has maintained a 3.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his sophomore year of high school 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 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.

Ortiz joins recent Gatorade Texas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Harris Partain (2015-16, Wakeland High School), Isidro Martinez (2014-15, Rivera High School), Chris Madden (2013-14, Coppell High School), Kayode George (2012-13, Alief Elsik High School), Tony Santibanez (2011-12, Plano Senior High School), Aaron Simmons (2010-11, Mansfield High School), Zach Barnes (2009-10, Marcus High School), Dillon Powers (2008-09, Plano Senior High School), Sam Garza (2007-08, Marcus High School), and Corben Bone (2006-07, Plano High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Jose will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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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