

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3651)

GILBERT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARIZONA 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 Danny Baca of Gilbert High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Arizona Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Baca is the first Gatorade Arizona Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Gilbert 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 Baca as Arizona'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, Baca 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 6-foot, 150-pound senior forward led the Tigers to a 20-3-1 record and the Conference 6A state championship this past season. Baca scored 37 goals, including the lone goal in Gilbert's 1-0 win over Tolleson High in the state title game. He also passed for 11 assists. Baca had 11 multi-goal games and scored six goals in the team's four-game postseason run to the title. He is a two-time Central Conference Player of the Year.

A member of his school's Ping Pong Club, Baca has volunteered locally at an after-school program for children and as a youth soccer coach. "Danny was on a team that needed a leader and he gave them that," said Drew Guarneri, head coach of Campo Verde High School. "They won the whole thing and he was a big reason they did. He was clutch for them game after game."

Baca has maintained a weighted 4.07 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at Fort Lewis College in Colorado 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 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.

Baca joins recent Gatorade Arizona Boys Soccer Players of the Year Josh Drack (2015-16, Hamilton High School), Musa Morris (2014-15, Sandra Day O'Connor High School), Adam Mosharrafa (2013-14, Brophy College Preparatory), Mason Robertson (2012-13, Pinnacle High School), Danny Arrubla (2011-12, Hamilton High School), Riggs Lennon (2010-11, Brophy College Preparatory), George Malki (2009-10, Pinnacle High School), Nick Ayers (2008-09, Brophy College Preparatory), Temi Molinar (2007-08, Brophy College Preparatory), and Kyle Ciliento (2006-07, Pinnacle High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Danny 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.

###