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BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS 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 'Lalo' Castro of Bentonville High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Castro is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville 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 Castro as Arkansas' 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, Castro 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-6, 165-pound senior midfielder scored eight goals and passed for 14 assists this past season, leading the Tigers (9-7-1) to the Class 7A state tournament. A First Team All-State selection, Castro was the Class 7A West Conference Newcomer of the Year as a sophomore in 2015. He opted to play club soccer as a junior and was a member of an FC Dallas team that won the 2016 U.S. Soccer Development Academy Under-16 national championship.

Castro has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Jose Castro is such a game-changer," said John Marshall, head coach of Bentonville West High School. "I think he is a complete player. He reads the game well, attacks with and without the ball and has an incredible shot."

Castro has maintained a 3.42 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at Oral Roberts 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 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.

Castro joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Brady Rosenow (2015-16, Conway High School), Chris Holmes (2014-15 & 2013-14, Catholic High School for Boys), Wes Carson (2012-13, Southside High School), Nelson Landaverde (2011-12, Springdale High School), William Hidalgo (2010-11, Cabot High School), John Lung'aho (2009-10, Parkview Arts/Science Magnet High School), Taylor Hart (2008-09, Conway High School), Stephen Maxwell (2007-08, Conway High School), and Jeff Chacko (2006-07, Catholic High School for Boys) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Jose 'Lalo' 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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