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LOUISVILLE COLLEGIATE SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 Haji Abdikadir of Louisville Collegiate School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Abdikadir is the first Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Louisville Collegiate 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 Abdikadir as Kentucky'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, Abdikadir 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-10, 150-pound junior forward scored 40 goals and passed for 12 assists this past season, leading the Titans (24-2-1) to the state tournament quarterfinals. Abdikadir dislocated his kneecap before the postseason and missed the team's first three tournament matches before returning in the regional round at far less than 100 percent. The state's Offensive Player of the Year, he was also an All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and is rated as the No. 35 recruit in the Class of 2018 by TopDrawerSoccer.com.

A refugee from Kenya, Abdikadir has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Nobody in the state can effectively shut Haji down," said Jim Stone, head coach of North Hardin High School. "We lost to Collegiate the last three years and he broke our backs each match. He is a game-changer."

Abdikadir has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Louisville beginning in the fall of 2018.

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.

Abdikadir joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Players of the Year Aime Mabika (2015-16, Henry Clay High School), Sam Stockton (2014-15 & 2013-14, Trinity High School), Chris Hubbard (2012-13, Trinity High School), Neil Henley (2011-12, St. Xavier High School), Oliver Brown (2010-11, St. Xavier High School), Lepe Seetane (2009-10, Trinity High School), Kevin Bick (2008-09 & 2007-08, St. Xavier High School), and Josh Lipka (2006-07, Lexington Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Haji 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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