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HELLGATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MONTANA 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 Matt Baldrige of Hellgate High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Baldrige is the third Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Hellgate 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 Baldrige as Montana'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, Baldrige 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-11, 155-pound sophomore midfielder led the Knights to a 13-1-3 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Baldrige scored nine goals and passed for 12 assists, including a goal in Hellgate's 3-2 win over Sentinel High School in the state final. A Great Falls Tribune Super-State selection, he led the state in assists as the Knights won their second straight state title.

An accomplished pianist, Baldrige has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and he has donated his time to the Montana Hell Ride, a cycling race. "Matt was the catalyst to Hellgate's attack as well as their defensive team shape," said Ryan Billiet, head coach of Glacier High School. "He had such an impact toward the end of the season and made it possible for them to win the state title."

Baldrige has maintained a 3.36 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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.

Baldrige joins recent Gatorade Montana Boys Soccer Players of the Year Peter Byrne (2015-16, Hellgate High School), Ben Hietala (2014-15, Bozeman High School), Alec Marshall (2013-14, Bozeman High School), Nick Downs (2012-13 & 2011-12, CM Russell High School), Anthony Keene (2010-11, Billings West High School), Zach Moyers (2009-10, Billings West High School), Jack Pueringer (2008-09, Billings West High School), Garion Holian (2007-08, Hellgate High School), and Adam Clinch (2006-07, Capital High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Matt 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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