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**DALTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Omar Hernandez of Dalton High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Hernandez is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Dalton 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 Hernandez as Georgia'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, Hernandez 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, 142-pound junior forward scored 28 goals and passed for 20 assists this past season, leading the Catamounts (16-3-1) to the second round of the Class AAAAAA state tournament. Hernandez recorded eight multi-goal games, including five hat tricks. He concluded his junior year with 62 goals and 47 assists in his prep soccer career.

Hernandez has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Omar's play this year was top-notch," said Bryan Hicks, head coach of Northgate High. "He controlled the game from beginning to end with his technical and tactical ability."

Hernandez has maintained a weighted 3.36 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at Wake Forest University beginning in the fall of 2019.

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.

Hernandez joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jake Donaldson (2016-17, McIntosh High School), Josh Bronstorph (2015-16, Dunwoody High School), Steven Moore (2014-15, Houston County High School), Adam Sheikali (2013-14, McIntosh High School), Salomon Lorenzano (2012-13, McIntosh High School), Holden Fender (2011-12, Walton High School), John "Snoopy" Davidson (2010-11, Rome High School), Jordan McCrary (2009-10, Lassiter), Chris Thomas (2008-09, Greater Atlanta Christian School), Connor Barbaree (2007-08, Walton), and Jimmy Maurer (2006-07, St. Pius X Catholic) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hernandez 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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