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**HELLGATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MONTANA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Matt Baldrige of Hellgate High School as its 2017-18 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot, 175-pound junior midfielder led the Knights to a 15-1-1 record and a third-straight Class AA state championship this past season. Baldrige scored 21 goals and passed for nine assists, tallying two goals and an assist in Hellgate's 4-2 win over Glacier High in the state final. A two-time First Team All-State selection, he concluded his junior year with 32 goals and 23 assists in his prep soccer career.

An accomplished pianist, Baldrige is a member of his school's Financial Academy. He has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Matt's presence on the field was top class," said Kumal LaCasse, head coach of Charles M. Russell High. "His strength, speed, field awareness and commitment to his teammates was evident from the first kickoff to the last whistle."

Baldrige has maintained a 3.34 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior 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.

Two-time winner 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), Garion Holian (2007-08, Hellgate), and Adam Clinch (2006-07, Capital) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Baldrige 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.