

SPRINGDALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 6, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Jose Vega of Springdale High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Vega is the second Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Springdale 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 Vega as Arkansas'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, Vega joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook High School, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel High School, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy School of Young Women, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick High School, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-04, Blue Valley West High School, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire High School, Mass.) and Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista High School, Colo.).

The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-7, 150-pound senior forward led the Bulldogs to a 19-2 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Vega recorded 24 goals and six assists as Springdale went undefeated against in-state competition. The cousin of 2011-12 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year Nelson Landaverde, he is a three-time First Team All-State selection and he concluded his prep soccer career with 70 goals and 25 assists.

Vega, who moved to the United States from El Salvador in 2013 without knowing any English, has volunteered locally with the Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas and as a youth soccer coach. "Jose Vega was the most dangerous player we faced all season," said Mike Devaney, head coach of Bentonville High. "He can shoot and score goals with both feet. He links up well with his teammates and brings them into the game, so he isn't solely a goal-scorer."

Vega has maintained a 3.15 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Neosho County Community College in Kansas 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Two-time winner Vega joins Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jose 'Lalo' Castro (2016-17, Bentonville High School), Brady Rosenow (2015-16, Conway High School), and Chris Holmes (2014-15 & 2013-14, Catholic High School for Boys) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Vega also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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