

FOREST HILLS NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Aidan O'Connor of Forest Hills Northern High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. O'Connor is the first Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Forest Hills Northern 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 O'Connor as Michigan'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, O'Connor 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 6-foot-4, 195-pound junior defender anchored a defense that allowed just nine goals all season, leading the Huskies (23-1-1) to the Division II state championship game, which Northern lost in a shootout after a scoreless tie. O'Connor also contributed two goals and two assists on offense. He was the only defender named to the Michigan High School Soccer Coaches Association Dream Team.

A member of his school's Diversity Club, O'Connor has volunteered locally on behalf of the Refugee Education Center in West Michigan and as a peer tutor. "We play one of the toughest schedules in the state, and Aidan was clearly the best player we faced," said Zach Jonker, head coach of Petoskey High. "He completely changed the dynamic of the game from the back line which is very difficult to do."

O'Connor has maintained a 3.56 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. 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.

O'Connor joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Soccer Players of the Year Ryan Pierson (2017-18, Detroit Catholic Central High School), Dalton Michael (2016-17, Traverse City West Senior High School), Anthony Bowie (2015-16, Forest Hills Central High School), DeJuan Jones (2014-15, East Lansing High School) and Alec Lasinski (2013-14, Skyline High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," O'Connor 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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