

**HENRY CLAY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 8, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Sota Ippongi of Henry Clay High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Ippongi is the second Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Henry Clay 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 Ippongi as Kentucky'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, Ippongi joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, 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 (2004-05, 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 5-foot-9, 140-pound senior forward led the Blue Devils to a 25-1-3 record and the state championship this past season. Ippongi tallied 26 goals and 10 assists, including 10 goals in Henry Clay's seven postseason matches. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Ippongi was also the Lexington Herald-Leader's All-City Player of the Year. He concluded his prep soccer career with 48 goals and 30 assists.

A first-generation American, Ippongi volunteers as an interpreter for students and soccer players from Japan. He has also donated his time to Habitat for Humanity and as a youth soccer coach. "Sota is a phenomenal player," said Chad Niedert, head coach of Highlands High. "He was a difference-maker both times we played them. He was integral in their season. Sota is extremely quick and technically sound. He could be a playmaker in the middle, beat players and provide service from wide positions or create opportunities as a striker."

Ippongi has maintained a weighted 4.58 GPA in the classroom. He will attend Centre College, where he will play soccer.

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.

Ippongi joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Soccer Players of the Year Brandon McManus (2018-19, Trinity High School), Jansen Wilson (2017-18, Elizabethtown High School), Haji Abdikadir (2016-17, Louisville Collegiate School), Aime Mabika (2015-16, Henry Clay High School), Sam Stockton (2014-15, Trinity High School), and Sam Stockton (2013-14, Trinity High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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.