

**LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 11, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Jeff Koch of Liberty High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Colorado Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Koch is the third Gatorade Colorado Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Liberty 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 Koch as Colorado'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, Koch 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 6-foot-1, 175-pound senior defender scored three goals and passed for four assists this past season, leading the Lancers (11-1) to the Class 5A state semifinals. Koch also anchored a defense that recorded five shutouts and surrendered just nine goals. A three-time All-Pikes Peak League selection, he was a 2021 Class 5A Second Team All-State honoree.

Koch has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through Mercy's Gate, and he has donated his time both as an elementary school teacher's aide and as a youth soccer coach and referee. "Jeff was the best defender we faced this year," said Karl Anderson, head coach of Rampart High. "He locked down the middle of the Lancers' defense as well as being an offensive threat on set pieces."

Koch has maintained a weighted 3.57 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Southern Methodist University 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Koch joins recent Gatorade Colorado Boys Soccer Players of the Year Thad Dewing (2019-20 & 2018-19, Air Academy High School), Michael Mooney (2017-18, Broomfield High School), and Tajon Buchanan (2016-17, Legacy High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Koch has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Koch is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

###