

**ST. DOMINIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Jake Karolczak of St. Dominic High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Missouri Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Karolczak is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Dominic 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 Karolczak as Missouri'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, Karolczak 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-11, 170-pound senior midfielder recorded 21 goals and 11 assists this past season, leading the Crusaders (23-2) to the Class 4 state championship game. In his only year playing high school soccer—prior to that he had only played club soccer—Karolczak was named the Class 4 Player of the Year and was a United Soccer Coaches High School All-American selection.

Karolczak has volunteered locally with Mary Queen of Angels, a non-profit that assists needy parents by providing baby supplies, and he has donated his time with SPENSA, a special-needs soccer program. "Jake is an individual with a unique soccer personality and compelling desire to win," said Greg Koeller, head coach of St. Dominic High. "Jake is improvisational and innovative with his creative abilities. He adds the spark of original thinking and a burst of creative energy that means the difference between a good team and a great team."

Karolczak has maintained a 3.16 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville 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.

Karolczak joins recent Gatorade Missouri Boys Soccer Players of the Year Christian Kraus (2019-20, Rockwood Summit High School), Nolan DeWeese (2018-19, Christian Brothers College High School), Kyle Ruark (2017-18, Rockhurst High School), and Billy Hency (2016-17, Rockwood Summit High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Karolczak has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Karolczak 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).

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