

**FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 11, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Francesco Pagano of Fayetteville-Manlius High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Pagano is the first Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Fayetteville-Manlius 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 Pagano as New York'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, Pagano 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, 180-pound senior forward scored 18 goals and passed for six assists this past season, leading the Hornets to an 11-0 record. The Central New York Player of the Year, Pagano was a United Soccer Coaches All-American and the New York State Player of the Year as a junior. He was also named to the Best XI squad at last month's High School All-America Game, scoring the only goal for the East team.

Pagano has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, the American Heart Association and youth soccer programs. "Francesco Pagano is in a class all by himself," said Dan Law, head coach at Jamesville-Dewitt High. "He's just a dominant athlete—his size, skill and explosiveness make him very dangerous. I can say without reservation that he was far and away the best player we've seen."

Pagano has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Syracuse 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.

Pagano joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Players of the Year Yaya Bakayoko (2019-20, Martin Luther King High School), Ousseni Bouda (2018-19 & 2017-18, Millbrook School), and Jack Beer (2016-17, Byram Hills High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Pagano has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Pagano 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, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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