

**MYERS PARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Carter Hensley of Myers Park High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Hensley is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Myers Park 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 Hensley as North Carolina'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, Hensley 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-2, 170-pound senior midfielder scored eight goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading the Mustangs (12-1-1) to the Class 4A state tournament championship match. The 2021 North Carolina Soccer Coaches Association State Player of the Year, Hensley was a First Team All-State selection. He did not play high school soccer as a junior due to club soccer commitments, and he concluded his prep soccer career with 15 goals and 22 assists.

A member of his local chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Hensley has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Carter is extremely fast, even with the ball at his feet, and has excellent vision," said Ron Ladimir, head coach of Porter Ridge High. "He is an absolute game-changer. He works hard in all aspects of the field. He's a player that can change a game in a minute."

Hensley has maintained a weighted 4.18 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Virginia Tech 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.

Hensley joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Players of the Year Landon Sloan (2019-20, Heritage High School), Cannon Tootle (2018-19, Swansboro High School), Izaiah Vignali (2017-18, A.C. Reynolds High School), and Camden Holbrook (2016-17, Green Hope High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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