

**CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Nikko Helderop of Century High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Helderop is the fifth Gatorade North Dakota Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Century 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 Helderop as North Dakota'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, Helderop 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 midfielder scored 13 goals and passed for five assists this past season, leading the Patriots (13-3-2) to the state championship. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Helderop was also a two-time All-Western Dakota Association honoree. He concluded his prep career with 28 goals and 15 assists.

Helderop has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, the American Red Cross, a soup kitchen and youth soccer programs. "Nikko is a player who can play multiple positions and still find ways to score or assist from all over the pitch," said Creighton Bachmeier, head coach at Minot High. "He was an excellent captain too, and you could tell his teammates really responded to him."

Helderop has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer at Northwestern College (Iowa) 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.

Helderop joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Boys Soccer Players of the Year Mason Stotz (2019-20, Bismarck High School), Telvin Vah (2018-19, West Fargo High School), Tresor Mugwaneza (2017-18, Bismarck High School), and Jake Reinholz (2016-17, Shanley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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