

**ST. IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE OHIO 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 Luciano Pechota of St. Ignatius High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Ohio Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Pechota is the fifth Gatorade Ohio Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Ignatius 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 Pechota as Ohio'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, Pechota 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-6, 150-pound junior midfielder led the Wildcats to a 21-0 record and a second-straight Division I state championship this past season. Pechota scored 14 goals and passed for 12 assists including one of each in St. Ignatius' 4-1 win over New Albany High in the state title game. The Ohio Soccer Coaches Association's Mr. Soccer winner, Pechota was a 2020 United Soccer Coaches High School All-American selection.

Pechota has volunteered locally as a tutor to younger students with limited English skills. He has also donated his time as a youth soccer coach. "Luciano is a very good pocket player (ball-hawking attacking midfielder) with great vision and quick play to put defenses under extreme pressure," said Mike Biros, head coach of Jackson High. "His team did a great job of finding him and he did an even better job of making the next play going forward."

Pechota has maintained a 3.74 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Pechota joins recent Gatorade Ohio Boys Soccer Players of the Year Kyle Folds (2019-20, St. Ignatius High School), Brennan Callow (2018-19, The Seven Hills School), Luke Kiley (2017-18, Dublin Coffman High School), and Stephen Milhoan (2016-17, St. Ignatius High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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