

**DIMOND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALASKA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 16, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Joseph Butzke** of **Dimond High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Alaska Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Butzke is the fifth Gatorade Alaska Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Dimond 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 Butzke as Alaska'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, Butzke 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, 175-pound senior forward scored 15 goals and passed for six assists this past season, leading the Lynx (12-1-5) to third place in the Division 1 state tournament. The Cook Inlet Conference Player of the Year, Butzke is also an All-Region honoree and a three-time All-State selection. He finished his prep career with 31 goals and 10 assists.

Butzke has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank, youth soccer programs, Hospice of Anchorage and the Clare House shelter for homeless women and children. "Butzke uses his size well and he's one of the strongest players in the state," said Dan Rufner, head coach at Service High. "He has a fantastic change of pace that is so quick that, while defenders know what to do, he still gets them to pause, then uses a quick step to unleash one of the best shots inside of the box that I've seen."

Butzke has maintained a weighted 4.07 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Fort Lewis College (Colo.) 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Butzke joins recent Gatorade Alaska Boys Soccer Players of the Year Hatcher Manning (2020-21, Service High School), Vaughn Simpson (2019-20, West Valley High School), Jack Green (2018-19, West Anchorage High School), and Noah Krozel (2017-18, Colony High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Butzke has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Butzke is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

###