

**RUSSELLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS 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 **Fernando Castro** of **Russellville High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Castro is the third Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Russellville 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 Castro as Arkansas' 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, Castro 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-10, 145-pound forward and midfielder scored 39 goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading the Cyclones (21-1-1) to the Class 5A state championship. An All-Arkansas Preps First Team selection, Castro is also a First Team All-Conference honoree. He is also an All-State selection.

Castro has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer programs. "Fernando Castro is definitely a game-changer," said Craig Moses, head coach at Lakeside High. "He's strong and fast with the ball and can score from anywhere."

Castro has maintained a 3.15 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Central Baptist College 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.

Castro joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jacob Chalk (2020-21, Conway High School), Dylan Rice (2019-20, Russellville High School), and Jose Vega (2018-19 & 2017-18, Springdale 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, Castro 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. Castro 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.