

**SERVITE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CALIFORNIA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 16, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Eddie Villeda** of **Servite High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade California Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Villeda is the first Gatorade California Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Servite 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 Villeda as California'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, Villeda 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-11, 165-pound senior forward and midfielder led the Friars to a 24-2-2 record and the Southern Section Division 1 Sectional Tournament title this past season. Villeda scored 20 goals and passed for 23 assists, and he had a pair of assists in a 2-1 overtime win over San Pasqual High as Servite capped its season by winning the Southern California Division I Regional tournament championship. The Southern Section Division I Player of the Year, he concluded his prep soccer career with 40 goals and 41 assists.

Villeda has volunteered locally at the Faley Games, a camp for students with special needs, and as a youth soccer coach. He has also donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Eddie was fantastic this season," said Sean Ganey, head coach of Mater Dei High. "In terms of chance-creation, he was at the top of the league by miles. It seemed he was everywhere, and any time they needed a goal, he was involved. He was a match-winner, plain and simple."

Villeda has maintained a weighted 3.46 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of California, Santa Barbara 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.

Villeda joins recent Gatorade California Boys Soccer Players of the Year Alex Halevy (2020-21, Garces Memorial High School), Andrew Valverde (2019-20, North High School), Blake Bowen (2018-19, San Clemente High School), and Tristan Weber (2017-18, San Clemente 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, Villeda 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. Villeda 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).