

**NAPERVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 **Alex Barger** of **Naperville North High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Barger is the seventh Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Naperville North 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 Barger as Illinois' 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, Barger 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-9, 145-pound junior midfielder scored 11 goals and passed for 14 assists this past season, leading the Huskies (21-6-2) to the Class 3A Super-Sectionals. The 2021 Daily Herald DuPage County All-Area captain, Barger was also a 2021 United Soccer Coaches High School All-American selection. A two-time First Team All-State honoree, he concluded his junior year with 29 goals and 30 assists in his prep soccer career.

Barger has volunteered locally with Feed My Starving Children and as a youth soccer coach. "Alex is the type of player that can make things happen for a team even when you think things are leveled," said Arnoldo Gonzalez, head coach of Neuqua Valley High School. "His stats can speak for his talent, but the way he changes the game cannot be put down on a stat sheet."

Barger has maintained a weighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at Indiana University beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Barger joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer Players of the Year Max Floriani (2020-21, Warren Township High School), Jack Finnegan (2019-20, Brother Rice High School), Colin Iverson (2018-19, Naperville North High School), and Tommy Welch (2017-18, Naperville North 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, Barger 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. Barger 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.

###