

**GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 **Malachi Jones** of **Grace Christian Academy** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Tennessee Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Jones is the first Gatorade Tennessee Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Grace Christian Academy.

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 Jones as Tennessee'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, Jones 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, 150-pound senior midfielder led the Lions to a 17-2-2 record and the Division II, Class A state championship this past season. Jones scored 22 goals and passed for 15 assists and tallied three goals and three assists in Grace Christian's three-game postseason run to the title. A four-time First Team All-State selection, he concluded his prep soccer career with 119 goals and 43 assists.

Adopted from Sierra Leone with seven other siblings, Jones has volunteered locally with Operation Christmas Box and as a youth soccer coach. "Malachi is one of the best high school players I have seen in the past decade," said Mike Burgoyne, head coach of Franklin High School. "He is quick, very technical and understands where to be (on the field) to create for himself and teammates. The sky's the limit for Malachi."

Jones has maintained a weighted 4.33 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Lipscomb University 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.

Jones joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Boys Soccer Players of the Year Gui Vivaldini (2020-21, McCallie School), Brandon Parrish (2019-20 & 2018-19, Fairview High School), and Atakelti Gebregabher (2017-18, Station Camp 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, Jones 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. Jones 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.