

**GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Nick Ihnat** of **George Washington High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Ihnat is the fourth Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from George Washington 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 Ihnat as West Virginia'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, Ihnat 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-2, 160-pound senior forward scored 32 goals and passed for 11 assists this past season, leading the Patriots (20-2-1) to the Class AAA state semifinals. The Class AAA Player of the Year, Ihnat was also selected the Kanawha Valley Player of the Year and the Mountain State Athletic Conference Player of the Year. He finished his prep career with 63 goals and 25 assists.

Ihnat has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer programs. "Ihnat can make something out of nothing," said Cleef Desir, head coach at Capital High School. "He's an all-around phenomenal player, both on and off the ball. He's lethal from 18 yards out and can score at any time."

Ihnat has maintained a 3.81 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Alderson Broaddus 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.

Ihnat joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jonas Branch (2020-21, Fairmont Senior High School), Khori Miles (2019-20, Robert C. Byrd High School), Joseph Biafora (2018-19, University High School), and Seth Jordan (2017-18, Nitro 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, Ihnat 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. Ihnat 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).