

**MILL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 16, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Nico Pendleton** of **Mill Valley High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Pendleton is the first Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Mill Valley 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 Pendleton as Kansas' 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, Pendleton joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ben Bender (2019-20, Calvert Hall College High School, Md.), Jacob Shaffelburg (2017-18, Berkshire School, Mass.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire School, Mass.) and Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-11, 150-pound senior midfielder led the Jaguars (17-1-1) this past season to the 6A state championship, the program's first state title in history, which came in the team's inaugural season in the 6A classification. Pendleton, the 6A Midfielder of the Year, finished with 15 goals and 11 assists. He scored at least one goal in each of Mill Valley's state tournament games, including the game-winning goals in the semifinals and final.

Pendleton has volunteered locally reading to elementary school students. He also has donated his time assisting at youth soccer camps since he was in middle school. "Mill Valley, the year before this one, was not very relevant in 5A," said Saul Hernandez, Dodge City High School head coach. "Nico came in and his leadership showed right away as they got moved up to 6A and went on to win it with a goal from Nico in the final."

Pendleton has maintained a 3.74 GPA in the classroom. Taking advantage of NCAA early signing rules, he inked a financial-aid agreement that paved the way for him to enroll at Marquette University, where he will play soccer. He graduated from high school in December.

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.

Pendleton joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Elyes Ellouz (2021-22, Olathe West High School), Alan Lopez (2020-21, Dodge City High School), Jony Munoz (2019-20, Olathe West High School), and Aidan Bates (2018-19, Blue Valley Southwest High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.