

**WAYZATA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 **Joe Highfield** of **Wayzata High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Highfield is the fourth Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Wayzata 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 Highfield as Minnesota'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, Highfield 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 6-foot-4, 185-pound senior forward led the Trojans to a 19-1-2 record and the Class AAA state championship this past season. Highfield scored 18 goals and passed for six assists. A two-time Class AAA First Team All-State selection, Highfield was also a United Soccer Coaches All-American honoree. He concluded his prep soccer career with 31 goals and 15 assists.

Highfield has volunteered locally at leadership seminars through the Minnesota State High School League, and he has donated his time as a youth soccer coach. "Joe's size and athleticism presented steep challenges for our defense, particularly on set pieces," said Mike Rogers, head coach of Minnetonka High School. "Joe is so creative off the ball, if defenders lose track of him he will find spaces to exploit and his teammates will find him. He is special because he is dangerous from everywhere."

Highfield has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Portland 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.

Highfield joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Boys Soccer Players of the Year Carter Hermanson (2021-22, Academy of Holy Angels), Zach Susee (2020-21, Shakopee High School), Jameson Charles (2019-20, Washburn High School), and Herbert Endeley (2018-19, Totino-Grace 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.

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