

**SANDIA PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW MEXICO BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 16, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Finnegan Saunders** of **Sandia Preparatory School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Saunders is the fifth Gatorade New Mexico Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Sandia Preparatory 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 Saunders as New Mexico'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, Saunders 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-9, 150-pound senior forward led the Sun Devils to a 19-4 record and the Class 3A state championship this past season. Saunders scored 44 goals and passed for 18 assists, netting both goals in Sandia Preparatory School's 2-0 win over Hatch Valley High School in the state final. A United Soccer Coaches All-American selection, Saunders graduates a three-time First Team All-State selection. He concluded his prep soccer career with 81 goals and 37 assists.

Saunders has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with his school's National Honor Society. "Finn was the total package," said Shaun Gill, head coach of Cleveland High School. "He was able to score goals, attack with pace and hold onto the ball in the attacking third. Finn is dangerous both on and off the ball."

Saunders has maintained a 3.83 GPA in the classroom. He will attend Trinity College in Texas, where he will play soccer, beginning 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.

Saunders joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Soccer Players of the Year Alex Waggoner (2021-22, Santa Fe High School), Marcus Garcia (2020-21, St. Pius X High School), and Gabe Legendre (2019-20 & 2018-19, Sue Cleveland 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](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).