

**CARDINAL GIBBONS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Joseph Abdenour** of **Cardinal Gibbons High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year**. Abdenour is the second Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Cardinal Gibbons 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 Abdenour as North Carolina'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, Abdenour 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-7, 135-pound junior midfielder led the Crusaders to an 18-5-3 record and the Class 4A state championship this past season. Abdenour netted 16 goals and passed for eight assists, including the lone goal in Cardinal Gibbons High School's 1-0 win over Weddington High School in the state title game, where he was named MVP. A First Team Class 4A All-State selection, he was the CAP 6 Conference Player of the Year and a United Soccer Coaches All-Mid Atlantic Region Team honoree.

Abdenour has volunteered locally with Habitat for Humanity and by packing boxes at a food pantry. He has also donated his time as a youth soccer coach. "Joseph was the talisman for the state championship team," said Jeff Nelson, head coach of Athens Drive High School. "He's physically small, but he's constantly moving, making smart runs and seems always available for a pass. He has a high soccer IQ. He's not explosive, but always in the right place to make the play."

Abdenour has maintained a weighted 3.35 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Abdenour joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Soccer Players of the Year Aidan Payne (2021-22, New Hanover High School), Carter Hensley (2020-21, Myers Park High School), Landon Sloan (2019-20, Heritage High School), and Cannon Tootle (2018-19, Swansboro 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.