

**MARTIN LUTHER KING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 8, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Yaya Bakayoko of Martin Luther King High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Bakayoko is the first Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Martin Luther King 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 Bakayoko as New York'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, Bakayoko 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 5-foot-9, 150-pound senior, midfielder, and forward amassed 31 goals and passed for 40 assists this past season, leading the Knights (15-0-2) to the city championship game. A three-time All-Metro First Team selection, Bakayoko finished his prep career with 74 goals and 101 assists. An Allstate All-American, he was named to the Best XI at December's High School All-American Game.

An advisory leader in his school, Bakayoko has served as a mentor and tutor for younger students. "I've been coaching since 2001 and Yaya Bakayoko is by far the best player I've seen in high school soccer," said Mark Hayward, head coach at Washington Irving High School. "He's very good in space, a strong finisher around the net and he has the best first-touch control I've seen at this level."

Bakayoko has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of North Carolina.

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 work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Bakayoko joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Soccer Players of the Year Ousseni Bouda (2018-19, Millbrook School), Ousseni Bouda (2017-18, Millbrook School), Jack Beer (2016-17, Byram Hills High School), Matt Vowinkel (2015-16, Chaminade High School), T.J. Butzke (2014-15, St. Anthony's High School), and Dylan Klein (2013-14, Carle Place High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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 www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.