

FORT PAYNE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA 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 Cristian Barrientos of Fort Payne High School is the 2022-23 Gatorade Alabama Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Barrientos is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Fort Payne 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 Barrientos as Alabama’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, Barrientos 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-10, 155-pound junior spent time at forward, midfield and defense this past season for the Wildcats (26-2-2) and led them to the 6A state championship. Barrientos finished with 40 goals and seven assists and was named MVP of the 6A state championship game. He netted all four of his team’s goals in a 4-3 win over Montgomery Academy.

Barrientos devotes as much time as he can away from soccer and school to working at a lumber salvage yard to help support his family. “Cristian has excellent foot skills on the ball, moves well with the ball at his feet and plays very quickly,” said Hartselle High School head coach Dan Bennich. “He has excellent field vision and switches the ball very well.”

Barrientos has maintained a 3.37 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.

Barrientos joins recent Gatorade Alabama Boys Soccer Players of the Year Jack Heaps (2021-22, Mountain Brook High School), Jackson Nabors (2020-21, Indian Springs School), Tony Shaw (2019-20, Vestavia Hills High School), and Logan Frost (2018-19, Briarwood Christian 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.

###