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**Gatorade National Boys Soccer Player of the Year:
Eric Alexander**

Michigan soccer star named nation's top high school performer

PORTAGE, Mich. (February 28, 2006) – Entering its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade® Thirst Quencher, in partnership with *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director* magazine, today announced Eric Alexander of Portage Central High School in Portage, Mich., as the 2005-06 Gatorade National Boys Soccer Player of the Year.

The award, which recognizes athletic achievement as well as the academic performance and overall character of its recipient, distinguishes Alexander as the nation's best high school boys soccer player. A national advisory board comprised of sportswriters and sport-specific experts from around the country selected Alexander from the more than 350,000 male high school soccer players nationwide. Alexander is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Male High School Athlete of the Year Award, to be presented at an awards ceremony the afternoon prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

Alexander, a 6-foot senior midfielder, led Portage Central to a district championship and 19-2-4 record with 28 goals and 11 assists this season. He is a four-time all-conference selection, earned first team All-State and Dream Team selections in 2004 and 2005, and was named 2005 Michigan "Mr. Soccer" and 2005 NSCAA National Player of the Year. One of only two players in the country to be twice named to an adidas Elite Soccer All-Star team, Alexander is a four-year member of the Michigan ODP team, a three-year member of the Region II ODP team, and was the 2004 State Cup MVP.

Alexander is also a star in the classroom, where he has a 3.9 GPA and scored 25 on the ACT. Eric is a member of the Business Professionals Association and the Rotary Club, and has volunteered for several causes including the Breast Cancer Walk, Kalamazoo Food Drive and Santa's Workshop.

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Alexander will attend Indiana University this fall on a soccer scholarship.

“Eric epitomizes the terms student-athlete and role model,” says Portage Central Head Coach B.J. Snow. “As proud as I am of Eric’s tremendous soccer achievements, I am more proud to know Eric as a person. He is a perfect representative of our program, our school, and our community.”

“Without question, Eric is deserving of recognition as the nation’s best high school boys soccer player based on his performance and the tremendous ability he’s demonstrated,” said Gatorade Senior Vice President of Sports Marketing Tom Fox. “But he is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young players of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. He represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient.”

The Gatorade Player of the Year program recognizes one winner in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and awards one National Player of the Year in five boys sports (football, soccer, basketball, baseball, track & field) and five girls sports (volleyball, soccer, basketball, softball, track & field). In addition to athletic performance, award criteria include the achievement in the classroom and overall character. Previous Gatorade National Player of the Year award winners include:

- Captain of the U.S. men’s national soccer team Claudio Reyna
- 2004 MLS Cup MVP Alecko Eskandarian
- NFL all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith
- Two-time NFL Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- Reigning American League Most Valuable Player Alex Rodriguez
- Beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Reigning 200-meter world champion Allyson Felix

For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information and lists of past winners and future announcement dates, visit www.gatorade.com/playeroftheyear.

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ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONOREES

Year	Name	High School/Location	Status
2005-06	Eric Alexander	Portage Central/Portage, MI	High School Senior
2004-05	Lee Nguyen	Plano East Senior/Plano, TX	PSV Eindhoven
2003-04	Patrick Phelan	Wilbraham & Monson Acad./Wilbraham, MA	Wake Forest U.
2002-03	Greg Dalby	Poway/Poway, CA	U. of Notre Dame
2001-02	Jordan Harvey	Capistrano Valley/Mission Viejo, CA	UCLA
2000-01	Ned Grabavoy	Lincoln Way/New Lenox, IL	Los Angeles Galaxy
1999-00	Alecko Eskandarian	Bergen Catholic/Oradell, NJ	D.C. United
1998-99	Kyle Martino	Staples, Westport/CT	Columbus Crew
1997-98	Nick Downing	Eastlake/Redmond, WA	U. of Maryland Grad
1996-97	Nick Garcia	Bishop Lynch/Dallas, TX	Kansas City Wizards
1995-96	Andy Kirk	Marquette University/Milwaukee, WI	U. of Maryland Grad
1994-95	Pierre Venditti	Jonathon Law/Milford, CT	U. of Maryland Grad
1993-94	Andriy Shapowal	Kenston High/Chagrin Falls, OH	U. of Virginia Grad
1992-93	Mike Fisher	Batavia/Batavia, IL	U. of Virginia Grad
1991-92	Matt McKeon	De Smet Jesuit/St. Louis, MO	Saint Louis U. Grad
1990-91	Claudio Reyna	St. Benedict's Prep/Newark, NJ	Manchester City FC
1989-90	Todd Haskins	Howard/Ellicott City, MD	U. of N. Carolina Grad
1988-89	Chris Henderson	Cascade/Everett, WA	UCLA Grad
1987-88	Lyle Yorks	E.O. Smith/Storrs, CT	U. of Virginia Grad
1986-87	John Gwin	Boise/Boise, ID	Duke U. Grad
1985-86	Kevin Hundelt	Aquinas-Mercy/Hazelwood, MO	So. Illinois U. Grad