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**VALLEY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CALIFORNIA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Kennedy Wesley of Valley Christian High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade California Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Wesley is the first Gatorade California Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Valley Christian 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 Wesley as California's best high school girls soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Wesley joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, including Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel HS, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick HS, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-04, Blue Valley West HS, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire HS, Mass.), Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista HS, Colo.).

The 5-foot-6 sophomore midfielder and defender led the Crusaders to a 25-3-3 record and both the Southern Section Division 6 and the Southern California Division V Regional tournament championships this past season. Wesley scored 22 goals and passed for nine assists. Rated as the No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2019 by TopDrawerSoccer.com, Wesley is a member of the U.S. Soccer Under-17 Women's National Team. She was the Southern Section Division 6 Player of the Year.

A violinist and former gymnast, Wesley has volunteered locally collecting and supplying goods to the homeless, and she has donated her time as a youth camp counselor. "At any moment, Kennedy was a game-changer," said Rob Gurule, head coach of Maranatha High School. "She was excellent in the air, on set pieces, throw-ins, 50-50 balls, all the intangibles. Her pace and change of speed and direction, even at higher speeds, created automatic separation."

Wesley has maintained a weighted 4.02 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at Stanford University beginning in the fall of 2019.

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.

Wesley joins recent Gatorade California Girls Soccer Players of the Year Taylor Ziemer (2015-16 & 2014-15 Montgomery High School), MacKenzie Cerda (2013-14, Edison High School), Amber Munerlyn (2012-13, Santiago High School), Ryan Walker-Hartshorn (2011-12, Bishop O'Dowd High School), Lauren Bohaboy (2010-11, Santa Margarita Catholic High School), Abby Dahlkemper (2009-10, Sacred Heart Preparatory), Lauren Matheson (2008-09, Mission Viejo High School), Teresa Noyola (2007-08, Palo Alto High School), and Lauren Barnes (2006-07, Upland High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kennedy will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

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