

BLUE VALLEY WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 13, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Marissa Popoola of Blue Valley West High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Kansas Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Popoola is the fourth Gatorade Kansas Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Blue Valley West 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 Popoola as Kansas' 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, Popoola joins an elite alumni association of past state soccer award-winners, 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 for 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-6 senior forward led the Jaguars to a 17-3-1 record and a third-straight Class 6A state championship this past season. Popoola scored 28 goals and passed for 11 assists, posting 10 multi-goal games. The Class 6A Offensive Player of the Year, she is a three-time First Team All-State selection. She concluded her prep soccer career with 88 goals.

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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Popoola joins recent Gatorade Kansas Girls Soccer Players of the Year Gracely Briley (2017-18 & 2016-17, Blue Valley Southwest High School), Maycee Bell (2015-16, Trinity Academy) and Parker Roberts (2014-15 & 2013-14, Blue Valley North High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Popoola also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

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.

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