

**Contact: John Manzo (312-729- 3656)**

**GRAYSON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 17, 2016) — In its 31<sup>st</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Ella Stevens of Grayson High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Stevens is the second Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Grayson 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 Stevens as Georgia'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 May, Stevens joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The returning Gatorade State Player of the Year, the 5-foot-9 senior midfielder and forward scored 25 goals and passed for 11 assists this past season, leading the Rams (14-4) to the second round of the Class AAAAAA state tournament. A member of the U.S. Soccer Under-20 Women's Team during its successful World Cup qualifying campaign in December, 2015, Stevens is a two-time Gwinnett Daily Post All-County selection. She concluded her prep soccer career with 74 goals and 84 assists.

Stevens has maintained a weighted 3.62 GPA in the classroom. A self-taught guitarist and pianist, she has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and on behalf of multiple community-service initiatives through her church youth group.

"Ella Stevens willed that team to win and put them on her back," said Chad Carithers, head coach of Brookwood High. "I think that speaks not only to her soccer ability but also her leadership and don't-give-up attitude."

Stevens has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at Duke University beginning 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 high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Two-time winner Stevens joins Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Players of the Year Jennifer Westendorf (2013-14, Grayson High School), Rachel Garcia (2012-13, Greater Atlanta Christian School), Emily Sonnett (2011-12, Fellowship Christian School), Morgan Brian (2010-11 & 2009-10, Frederica Academy), Laura Eddy (2008-09, Marist School), Ashley Baker (2007-08, Parkview High School), and Marah Falle (2006-07, Parkview High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

###