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## **NORTHWEST RANKIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 12, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Sumner Richardson of Northwest Rankin High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Richardson is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Northwest Rankin 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 Richardson as Mississippi'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, Richardson 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-9, 160-pound senior defender led the Cougars to a 23-1 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Richardson scored six goals and passed for nine assists, and he was the anchor of a defense that allowed just 12 goals and notched 15 shutouts. Richardson tallied a goal and an assist in Northwest Rankin's 2-0 win over Ocean Springs High in the title game. He is a two-time First Team All-State selection.

Richardson has volunteered locally with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi and as part of multiple community-service initiatives through his church. "Sumner was a difference maker," said Jeff French, head coach of Ocean Springs High School. "He is quality on the ball, has pace that we just couldn't match and seemed to always be in the right place at the right time, which means he is a smart player as well."

Richardson has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at William Carey 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 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.

Richardson joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Soccer Players of the Year Ridge Brohaugh (2015-16, Madison Central High School), Wanner Paiz (2014-15, Terry High School), Ridge Brohaugh (2013-14, Madison Central High School), Eli Troutman (2012-13, Ocean Springs High School), Jake Files (2011-12, Clinton High School), Derrick "Ducky" Troutman (2010-11, Ocean Springs High School), Jarred Arde (2009-10, Gulfport High School), Dillon Walker (2008-09, Pearl High School), Chris Williams (2007-08, Pearl High School), and Barry Prather (2006-07, Clinton High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sumner 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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