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## **MCGILL-TOOLEN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Eva Knapstein of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Knapstein is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from McGill-Toolen Catholic 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 Knapstein as Alabama'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, Knapstein 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-10 senior goalkeeper led the Yellow Jackets to a 24-2 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Knapstein tallied 12 solo shutouts and allowed just eight goals. Knapstein gave up just one goal in four postseason games, culminating with eight saves in a 2-0 win over Vestavia Hills in the state final. A three-time First Team All-State selection, she concluded her prep soccer career with 98 wins and 38 shutouts.

A student ambassador at McGill-Toolen, Knapstein has volunteered locally on community-beautification projects and as a peer chemistry tutor. "Eva has such a presence in the goal that is intimidating for her opponents and I am sure gives the 10 girls in front of her a ton of confidence," said Kevin Watson, head coach of Fairhope High School. "I knew we had to figure out how we were going to score on her because a regular shot was likely not going to get it done."

Knapstein has maintained a weighted 3.47 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at Coastal Carolina 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.

Knapstein joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Players of the Year Julia Pack (2015-16, Oak Mountain High School), Leigh Haynes (2014-15, Mountain Brook High School), Claudia Day (2013-14, Briarwood Christian School), Toni Payne (2012-13, Oak Mountain High School), Bailee Hartnett (2011-12, Oak Mountain High School), Simone Charley (2010-11, Spain Park High School), Annalika Steyn (2009-10, Spain Park High School), Lauren Arnold (2008-09, Spain Park High School), Mary Nicholson (2007-08, Vestavia Hills High School), and Victoria Frederick (2006-07, Huntsville High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Eva 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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