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HAWAII PREPARATORY ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE HAWAII 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 Emi Higgins of Hawaii Preparatory Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade Hawaii Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Higgins is the first Gatorade Hawaii Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Hawaii Preparatory Academy.

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 Higgins as Hawaii'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, Higgins 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 sophomore forward and midfielder led the Ka Makani to an 11-2-2 record and the Division II state championship this past season. Higgins scored 19 goals, including seven of Hawaii Prep's nine tallies in five postseason games, and passed for seven assists. She scored both goals in the state semifinals and the only goal in HPA's 1-0 win over Kapaa High in the title game, earning herself the tournament's Most Outstanding Player award.

A Hawaii Prep student ambassador, Higgins is a member of her school's student council and she has volunteered locally with the Kona Hospital Foundation. "Emi is a great soccer player. She's very technical with the ball and she's very athletic," said Josh Woodard, head coach of Kamehameha School-Hawaii. "She doesn't have overwhelming top-end speed, but she's fast and quick enough to create opportunities for herself around the box. She was their most important piece this season."

Higgins has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Higgins joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Girls Soccer Players of the Year Sunshine Fontes (2015-16, Pearl City High School), Kristen Hori (2014-15, Iolani School), Kiani Halushka (2013-14, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Jill Shimabuku (2012-13, Iolani School), Carly Neal (2011-12, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Caprice Dydasco (2010-11, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Mari Miyashiro (2009-10, Mililani High School), Jayann Gabrio (2008-09, Punahou School), Tani Costa (2007-08, Kalani High School), and Mari Punzal (2006-07, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Emi 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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