

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**MAINE SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 Emma Thomson of Maine South High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Thomson is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Maine South 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 Thomson as Illinois' 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, Thomson 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-5 senior midfielder and forward scored 33 goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading the Hawks (13-5-1) to the Class 3A regional finals. In her only year playing high school soccer instead of club soccer, Thomson scored in 16 of Maine South's 19 games with 10 multi-goal games, including five hat tricks and one four-goal game. She is a three-time Youth All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America for her club play.

A member of the Spanish Club at Maine South, she has volunteered locally as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit Rett syndrome research. "Emma brought a different element and played the game at a speed that is pretty unnatural in high school soccer," said Spero Mandakas, head coach of Whitney Young High School. "She carried her team."

Thomson has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at Penn State 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.

Thomson joins recent Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Players of the Year Kelly Maday (2015-16, New Trier High School), Jenna Szczesny (2014-15 & 2013-14, Barrington High School), Zoe Swift (2012-13, Naperville North High School), Courtney Raetzman (2011-12, Conant High School), Megan Oyster (2010-11, Neuqua Valley High School), Vanessa DiBernardo (2009-10, Waubonsie Valley High School), Rachel Quon (2008-09, Lake Forest High School), Bri Rodriguez (2007-08, Waubonsie Valley High School), and Tessa Gavilsky (2006-07, Granite City High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Emma 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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