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**MAPLE GROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Meredith Haakenson of Maple Grove Senior High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Haakenson is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Maple Grove Senior 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 Haakenson as Minnesota'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, Haakenson 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-6 junior midfielder scored 15 goals and passed for 12 assists this past season, leading the Crimson (13-3-3) to the Section 5AA tournament championship game, losing in overtime to eventual state champion Centennial High. A three-time Class AA First Team All-State selection, Haakenson is a member of the U.S. Youth Soccer Region II Olympic Development Program team, and she is rated as the nation's No. 23 recruit in the Class of 2018 by TopDrawerSoccer.com.

Haakenson started a non-profit to raise money to battle childhood cancer. She has volunteered locally with Feed My Starving Children and as a youth soccer coach and referee. "Once the ball is at Meredith's feet and she is able to take a few steps, she truly becomes one with the ball, moving seamlessly together," said Calen Nimmer, head coach of Champlin Park High School. "What sets Meredith apart from others is her deceptive, technical creativity on the ball."

Haakenson has maintained a 3.80 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Michigan beginning in the fall of 2018.

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.

Haakenson joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Players of the Year Hannah Cade (2015-16, Lakeville North High School), Sophie Babo (2014-15, Orono High School), Elizabeth Endy (2013-14, Minnetonka High School), Jenna Roering (2012-13, Centennial High School), Jenna Roering (2011-12, Centennial High School), Taylor Uhl (2010-11, Eden Prairie High School), Kassey Kallman (2009-10, Woodbury High School), Catie Sessions (2008-09, Woodbury High School), Krista Lundgren (2007-08, Lakeville South High School), and Angie Olson (2006-07, Eagan High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Meredith 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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