

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Morgan O'Connor of Oxford High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year. O'Connor is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Oxford 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 O'Connor as Mississippi'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, O'Connor 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-2 freshman forward scored 55 goals and passed for 18 assists this past season, leading the Chargers (20-0) to their second consecutive Class 5A state championship. O'Connor is a two-time District MVP and a Clarion-Ledger First Team All-State honoree.

A devoted member of her church youth group, O'Connor has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer camps and a charity road race. "Morgan O'Connor is an incredible player, especially for her age," said Hannah Kimbrough, head coach of Tupelo High School. "She has the ability to change a game all by herself."

O'Connor has maintained a 3.33 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

O'Connor joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Players of the Year Alley Houghton (2015-16 & 2014-15, Lafayette High School), Beth Coleman (2013-14, West Jones High School), Marion Crowder (2012-13, Madison Central High School), Sara Coleman (2011-12, West Jones High School), Laura Lee Smith (2010-11 & 2009-10, Jackson Preparatory School), Tricia Tillman (2008-09, Madison Central High School), Kelsey Myrick (2007-08, Gulfport High School), and Rachel Givan (2006-07, Ridgeland High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Morgan 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.

###