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PARKVIEW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE GEORGIA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 18, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Nieva Gaither of Parkview High School** as its **2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Gaither is the second Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Parkview 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 Gaither as Georgia'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, Gaither 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 (2004-05, Blue Valley West HS, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire HS, Mass.) and Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista HS, Colo.).

The 5-foot-3 sophomore forward led the Panthers to a 23-1 record and the Class AAAAAAA state championship this past season. Gaither scored 37 goals and passed for 10 assists, including one of each in Parkview's 2-0 win over Milton High in the title game. Gaither recorded at least one point in all 24 games with 11 multi-goal games. The Region 7 Forward of the Year, she concluded her sophomore year with 51 goals and 21 assists in her prep soccer career.

Gaither has volunteered locally at a food bank and with an animal rescue organization. She has also donated her time with Project 101, which gathers school supplies for children in the Philippines. "Nieva Gaither had a great season," said Randy Hayes, head coach of Whitewater High. "She can control the tempo of the game and she rarely lost the ball. She is a very dangerous player who elevates those around her."

Gaither has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at Furman University beginning in the fall of 2020.

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.

Gaither joins recent Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Players of the Year Rachel Jones (2016-17, Collins Hill High School), Ella Stevens (2015-16 & 2014-15, Grayson High School), Jennifer Westendorf (2013-14, Grayson High School), Rachel Garcia (2012-13, Greater Atlanta Christian School), Emily Sonnett (2011-12, Fellowship Christian School), Morgan Brian (2010-11 & 2009-10, Frederica Academy), Laura Eddy (2008-09, Marist School), Ashley Baker (2007-08, Parkview), and Marah Falle (2006-07, Parkview) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Gaither 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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