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## **AMES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE IOWA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 18, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Melina Hegelheimer of Ames High School** as its **2017-18 Gatorade Iowa Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Hegelheimer is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Ames 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 Hegelheimer as Iowa'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, Hegelheimer 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-4 junior midfielder scored eight goals and passed for two assists this past season, leading the Little Cyclones (12-5) to the Class 3A Region 1 tournament semifinals. A 2017 First Team All-State selection, Hegelheimer also became a 2017 All-Tournament Team honoree after leading Ames to the state championship. She concluded her junior year with 12 goals and 13 assists in her prep soccer career.

Hegelheimer founded the Mentoring Minorities Program at Ames High, which won the 2017-18 Story County Youth Volunteer Award. She has also donated her time locally with Students Helping End Poverty and Hunger, and Teens Against Human Trafficking. "Melina is a very creative player, and combine that with her technical skill, speed and confidence, you get a truly amazing player," said Bobby Myers, head coach of Ames High. "She is very fun to watch as you never know what she will do."

Hegelheimer has maintained an unweighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Iowa beginning in the fall of 2019.

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.

Hegelheimer joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Soccer Players of the Year Regan Steigleder (2016-17, Iowa City West High School), Meg Brandt (2015-16 & 2014-15, Ankeny Centennial High School), Rose Ripslinger (2013-14, 2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Assumption High School), MacKenzie Misel (2009-10, Ankeny Centennial High School), Jade Grimm (2008-09, Kennedy High School), and Whitney Sharpe (2007-08 & 2006-07, Valley High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hegelheimer 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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