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NORTHWEST RANKIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Tay Collum of Northwest Rankin High School** as its **2017-18 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Collum is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Northwest Rankin 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 Collum 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, Collum 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-6 senior defender scored nine goals and passed for six assists this past season, leading the Cougars (23-2) to the Class 6A state final. Collum anchored a defense that recorded 16 shutouts. She is a two-time Clarion-Ledger First Team All-State honoree and was named Mississippi Preps Female Player of the Year as a junior.

A devoted member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Collum has served as a tutor in her school and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer teams and the U.S. Youth Soccer TOPSoccer program serving young athletes with disabilities. "Tay Collum is a great soccer player," said Cecil Hinds, head coach of Madison Central High. "She was a pillar of strength for that team, a vocal leader with a high work ethic. Arguably, she's been the most consistent and impactful defender in the state over the last couple of years."

Collum has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Alabama-Birmingham 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.

Collum joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Players of the Year Morgan O'Connor (2016-17, Oxford High School), 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, Collum 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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