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## **T.F. RIGGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 **Joana Zanin of T.F. Riggs High School** as its **2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Zanin is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from T.F. Riggs 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 Zanin as South Dakota'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, Zanin 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 forward led the Lady Governors to a 12-1-2 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Zanin scored 29 goals and passed for five assists, including six goals in Riggs' three-game postseason run to the state title. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she concluded her prep soccer career with 63 goals and 20 assists.

The manager of the Riggs boys basketball team, Zanin has volunteered locally at a daycare center and as a youth soccer coach. "Joana has a very big physical presence on the field both offensively and defensively," said Tyler Schuring, head coach of Yankton High. "She is the only player we faced during the season where I had to game-plan for her and make adjustments at halftime."

Zanin has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. She will attend the University of South Dakota beginning 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.

Zanin joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Players of the Year Theresa Pujado (2016-17 & 2015-16, O'Gorman High School), Jessica Ryan (2014-15, Belle Fourche High School), and KJ Medler (2013-14, St. Thomas More High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Zanin 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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