

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

CHICAGO (June 13, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Nieva Gaither of Parkview High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Georgia Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Gaither is the third 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 High School, Mich.), Steve Cherundolo (1996-97, Mt. Carmel High School, Calif.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women, N.Y.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, 2002-03, East Brunswick High School, N.J.), Matt Besler (2004-05, Blue Valley West High School, Kans.), Jack Harrison (2013-14, Berkshire High School, Mass.) and Mallory Pugh (2014-15, Mountain Vista High School, Colo.).

The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-3 junior forward recorded 37 goals and 11 assists this past season, leading the Panthers (20-2) to the Class AAAAAAA state semifinals. Gaither tore a ligament in her foot during the second round of the state tournament and returned after missing one game to score a pair of goals in a 3-2 loss to North Gwinnett in the state semifinals. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she concluded her junior year with 87 goals and 30 assists in her prep soccer career.

Gaither has volunteered locally at a food bank and with an animal rescue organization, and she has donated her time to Project 101, which gathers school supplies for children in the Philippines. "Nieva is a great player and at times carried the Parkview team on her back," said Chad Carithers, head coach of Brookwood High. "She does not do it in a selfish manner. She will make runs knowing that two defenders will follow her. In turn that opens up space for her teammates."

Gaither has maintained a 3.97 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Two-time winner Gaither joins 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) and Jennifer Westendorf (2013-14, Grayson High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Gaither also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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