

OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Morgan O'Connor of Oxford High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. O'Connor is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Oxford 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 O'Connor 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, O'Connor 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 5-foot-2 senior forward scored 34 goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading the Chargers (18-2-1) to the Class 6A quarterfinals. The state's Gatorade Girls Soccer Player of the Year as a sophomore, O'Connor is a four-time Clarion-Ledger All-State selection and was named Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal Player of the Year three times.

A devoted member of her church youth group, O'Connor has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer camps and a charity road race. "Morgan O'Connor is just at a different level than any other player in the state," said Dean Joseph, head coach of Northwest Rankin High. "She's the most athletic and effective player we faced. Every time she got the ball, it looked like she would score or make something happen."

O'Connor has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Mississippi 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. 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 O'Connor joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Players of the Year Tay Collum (2017-18, Northwest Rankin High School) Alley Houghton (2015-16 & 2014-15, Lafayette High School), and Beth Coleman (2013-14, West Jones High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," O'Connor 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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