

EASTERN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 **Kelli McGroarty of Eastern Regional High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. McGroarty is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Eastern Regional 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 McGroarty as New Jersey'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, McGroarty 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-6 junior midfielder led the Vikings to a 26-2 record and the Group 4 state championship this past season. McGroarty recorded 37 goals and 10 assists and scored the lone goal in Eastern's 1-0 win over Bridgewater-Raritan High in the state final. The Philadelphia Inquirer and Courier Post South Jersey Player of the Year, McGroarty was also the NJ.com State Player of the Year and a United Soccer Coaches All-American selection. She concluded her junior year with 69 goals and 40 assists in her prep soccer career.

McGroarty has volunteered locally as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit cancer research and as a youth soccer coach. "Kelli McGroarty had the best year of any player that has come through South Jersey in my 17 years of coaching," said Drew Wagner, head coach of Shawnee High. "What made her so dangerous is that she gets on the final end of every ball possible. She has a will to score like no one I've seen."

McGroarty has maintained a weighted A-minus average in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at La Salle 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.

McGroarty joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Players of the Year Amy Paternoster (2017-18, Wall High School), Frankie Tagliaferri (2016-17 & 2015-16, Colts Neck High School), Hana Kerner (2014-15, Northern Highlands Regional High School) and Caroline Chagares (2013-14, Ramapo High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," McGroarty 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.

###