

JAMES MADISON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Julia Leas of James Madison High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Virginia Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Leas is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from James Madison 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 Leas as Virginia'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, Leas 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-8 senior midfielder recorded 26 goals and four assists this past season, leading the Warhawks (12-4-1) to the Class 6, Region D tournament quarterfinals. Leas injured her ankle late in the regular season and missed five games before returning to score Madison's lone goal in a 6-1 loss to Yorktown in the regional quarterfinals. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she concluded her prep soccer career with 71 goals and 32 assists.

Leas has developed a podcast to help raise awareness of mental health challenges facing athletes. She has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and a peer psychology tutor. "Julia is a game-changer," said Melissa Bibbee, head coach of Chantilly High School. "You have to manage her if you want to win. She's lethal in the air and a physical specimen. She ran that team."

Leas has maintained a weighted 4.47 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Georgetown University 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.

Leas joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Soccer Players of the Year Claire Constant (2017-18 & 2016-17, T.C. Williams High School), Tess Sapone (2015-16, Oakton High School), Kristina Diana (2014-15, South County High School) and Katie Cousins (2013-14, Jefferson Forest High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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