

**MIRA COSTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CALIFORNIA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 17, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Grace Watkins of Mira Costa High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade California Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Watkins is the first Gatorade California Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Mira Costa 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 Watkins as California'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, Watkins joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, 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 of 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-3 senior midfielder and forward led the Mustangs to a 24-3 record and the Southern Section, Division 2 Tournament championship this past season. Watkins compiled 28 goals and 10 assists, including one of each in a 5-1 win over Oak Hills High in the sectional title game. Watkins missed four games late in the regular season as she participated in the Tricontinental Cup with the U.S. Soccer Under-18 Women's National Team. The Southern Section Division 2 Player of the Year, she concluded her prep soccer career with 45 goals and 38 assists.

A member of the Mira Costa Symphony Orchestra, Watkins plays the piano and viola. She has volunteered locally with the Lend-A-Hand Club, which benefits the homeless in Los Angeles, and she has donated her time with the Friendship Foundation, a group that works with children with special needs. "Grace has a tremendous drive on top of unbelievable athletic ability," said Shelly Marsden, head coach of Redondo Union High. "You absolutely can't get the ball from her. No matter if you man-mark or double-team, she still finds a way to hang on to the ball."

Watkins has maintained a weighted 4.13 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Duke University.

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.

Watkins joins recent Gatorade California Girls Soccer Players of the Year Sophie Jones (2018-19, Menlo School), Isabella D'Aquila (2017-18, JSerra Catholic High School), Kennedy Wesley (2016-17, Valley Christian High School), Taylor Ziemer (2015-16, Montgomery High School), Taylor Ziemer (2014-15, Montgomery High School), and MacKenzie Cerda (2013-14, Edison High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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.