

**CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 15, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Khyah Harper of Centennial High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Harper is the second Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Centennial 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 Harper as Minnesota'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, Harper 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-5 senior forward led the Cougars to a 13-1 record and the Section 7AA tournament championship this past season. Harper recorded 26 goals and 10 assists, including a tally in Centennial's 2-0 win over Blaine High in the sectional title game. The state's Class AA Miss Soccer winner, Harper was named the Pioneer Press and Star Tribune Metro Player of the Year. Ranked as the nation's No. 43 recruit in the Class of 2021 by TopDrawerSoccer.com, she concluded her prep soccer career with 134 goals and 71 assists.

Harper has volunteered locally at the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities and on behalf of Feed My Starving Children. She has also donated her time as a youth soccer coach and referee. "Khyah was the player on the field that never ceased to amaze you with or without the ball," said Aaron Lindquist, head coach of Rogers High. "She was not only the most technically skilled player on the field, but also the one who was doing the gritty work."

Harper has maintained a 3.56 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Minnesota 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. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Harper joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Girls Soccer Players of the Year Paige Peltier (2019-20, Cretin-Derham Hall), Megan Plaschko (2018-19, Eagan High School), and Meredith Haakenson (2017-18 & 2016-17, Maple Grove Senior High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Harper has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Harper is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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