

**LAKE NORMAN CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 15, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Asha Means of Lake Norman Charter High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Means is the second Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Lake Norman Charter 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 Means as North Carolina'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, Means 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-7 senior forward and midfielder led the Knights to a 19-0 record and the Class 2A state championship this past season. Means scored 42 goals and passed for 11 assists, and she notched a hat trick in LNC's 5-0 win over Carrboro High in the state title game. A Class 2A First Team All-State selection, she was the MVP of the state championship match and the South Fork Conference Player of the Year.

The co-founder of Lake Norman Charter's African American Studies Club, Means has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit cancer research. She has also donated her time on behalf of the Special Olympics. "Asha is one of the toughest players I've coached against in a long, long time," said Jason Dragoon, head coach of East Lincoln High. "She's extremely dynamic as a player. Not just an out-and-out striker, she moves really well off the ball and on the ball. She doesn't stop running."

Means has maintained a weighted 4.20 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of North Carolina 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.

Means joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Players of the Year Ayden Yates (2019-20, Lake Norman Charter High School), Marissa Hart (2018-19, Providence Day School), Mary Elliott McCabe (2017-18, Charlotte Latin School), and Ashlynn Serepca (2016-17, Hough High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Means has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Means 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, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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