

**UNION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Makenzie Malham of Union High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Malham is the fourth Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Union 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 Malham as Oklahoma'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, Malham 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-9 junior midfielder and forward scored 18 goals and passed for seven assists this past season, leading Union (10-4) to the Class 6A semifinals. Malham is an All-State honoree, a two-time All-District selection and a finalist for the Tulsa World All-World Player of the Year. She's ranked as the South region's No. 2 prospect in the Class of 2022 by Top Drawer Soccer.

Also a basketball standout, Malham is a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Council and has volunteered locally in association with the National Honor Society. "Malham is a true winner," said Sam Bowers, head coach at Owasso High. "She's a great overall player who affects the game in a lot of different ways."

Malham has maintained a weighted 4.63 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Malham joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Soccer Players of the Year Madison Tokarchik (2019-20, Bishop Kelley High School), Ashton Gordon (2018-19 & 2017-18, Booker T. Washington High School), and Taylor Malham (2016-17, Union High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Malham has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Malham 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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