

**ABERDEEN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Megan Fastenau of Aberdeen Central High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Fastenau is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Aberdeen Central 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 Fastenau as South Dakota'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, Fastenau 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-10 senior forward scored 16 goals and passed seven assists this past season, leading the Golden Eagles (12-1-1) to the Class AA state quarterfinals. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she is also a three-time Eastern South Dakota Conference honoree. She concluded her prep soccer career with 36 goals and 22 assists.

Fastenau has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her school's National Honor Society. "Megan is a talented soccer player who can read the game and distribute the ball to her teammates," said Merle Aske, head coach of Aberdeen Central High. "She is a very talented striker with the ability to score in many different ways. Her size and strength play to her advantage."

Fastenau has maintained a weighted 4.30 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Northern State 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 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.

Fastenau joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Soccer Players of the Year Jaiden Boomsma (2019-20, Yankton High School), Lexie Wood (2018-19, Stevens High School), Joana Zanin (2017-18, T.F. Riggs High School), and Theresa Pujado (2016-17, O'Gorman High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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