

**BALLARD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June, 23, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ella Sanchez** of **Ballard High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Sanchez is the first Gatorade Kentucky Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Ballard 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 Sanchez as Kentucky'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, Sanchez 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-4 junior midfielder and forward scored 64 goals and passed for 14 assists this past season, leading the Bruins (14-5) to the 7th Region Tournament semifinals. The Kentucky High School Coaches Association West Player of the Year, Sanchez was a 2021 United Soccer Coaches All-American selection. A two-time First Team All-State honoree, she concluded her junior year with 144 goals and 60 assists in her prep soccer career.

Sanchez has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. "Ella makes exceptional forward and diagonal runs to free up space for herself," said Aaron Bridge, head coach of Eastern High School. "She can clean up virtually any ball sent her way with a top-class first touch. I've been coaching soccer in Region 7 for about eight years now. They don't get much better than Ella Sanchez."

Sanchez has maintained a weighted 4.11 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Sanchez joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Soccer Players of the Year Mallory Glass (2020-21, Sacred Heart Academy), Anna Haddock (2019-20 & 2018-19, Greenwood High School), and Cassie Amshoff (2017-18, Sacred Heart Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Sanchez has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Sanchez is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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