

**GULFPORT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Kate Smith** of **Gulfport High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Smith is the second Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Gulfport 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 Smith as Mississippi'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, Smith 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 senior forward scored 36 goals and passed for 21 assists this past season, leading the Admirals (20-1-1) to the Class 6A state quarterfinals. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Soccer Player of the Year, Smith is a three-time Sun Herald South Mississippi Player of the Year and a First Team All-State honoree. She concluded her prep career with 124 goals and 69 assists.

A devoted member of her church youth group, Smith has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank, coastal clean-up initiatives and youth soccer camps. "Kate Smith is a complete player in every sense," said Todd Moniz, head coach at Biloxi High School. "She's a fierce competitor, very athletic and technically gifted, with a good understanding of the game. She is very capable of beating a player on either side, with her left foot or right, and because of that, opponents need to have two or more players ready to help defend against her at all times."

Smith has maintained a 3.88 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Mississippi 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.

Two-time winner Smith joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Soccer Players of the Year Lucy Green (2019-20, West Lauderdale High School), Morgan O'Connor (2018-19, Oxford High School), and Tay Collum (2017-18, Northwest Rankin High School), 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, Smith 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. Smith 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.