

**RUTGERS PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 **Melina Rebimbas** of **Rutgers Preparatory School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Rebimbas is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Rutgers Preparatory 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 Rebimbas as New Jersey'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, Rebimbas 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 junior midfielder and forward scored 40 goals and passed for 31 assists this past season, leading the Argonauts (21-2) to the Non-Public B Division state championship game. Rebimbas recorded eight hat tricks, including a four-goal game. Ranked as the nation's No. 6 recruit in the Class of 2023 by TopDrawerSoccer.com, she has attended multiple training camps with the U.S. Soccer Under-17 Women's National Team. She concluded her junior year with 74 goals and 42 assists in her prep soccer career.

The secretary of the Rutgers Prep School Council, Rebimbas has volunteered locally with the Tend to a Friend Club, which matches older students with special-needs children. She has also donated her time as part of a toy drive for the Ronald McDonald House and as a youth soccer coach. "I have coached high school soccer for a long, long time and I have seen some really great players—Melina is as special and talented as any of them," said Jeremy Beardsley, head coach of Immaculata High School. "She has the ability to singularly take over the match. That is not an easy task in the game of soccer."

Rebimbas has maintained a weighted 4.19 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play soccer on scholarship at the University of North Carolina beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Rebimbas joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Girls Soccer Players of the Year Emily Mason (2020-21 & 2019-20, Hunterdon Central Regional High School), Kelli McGroarty (2018-19, Eastern Regional High School), and Amy Paternoster (2017-18, Wall 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, Rebimbas 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. Rebimbas 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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