

**MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 **Lia Howard** of **Massapequa High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New York Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Howard is the fifth Gatorade New York Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Massapequa 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 Howard as New York'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, Howard 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-2 senior forward and midfielder scored 16 goals and passed for 29 assists this past season, leading the Chiefs (20-0-1) to the Class AA state championship. The Class AA Player of the Year, Howard is a two-time All-State honoree. She was also the Nassau County Player of the Year and a United Soccer Coaches All-American selection.

Howard has volunteered locally on behalf of an animal shelter, her school's Best Buddies Club and a youth futsal (indoor soccer) program. "Lia Howard is a standout whenever she steps on the field," said Nicolette Tortorici, head coach at East Meadow High School. "She's a skilled playmaker with athleticism and a great understanding of the game."

Howard has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Illinois 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.

Howard joins recent Gatorade New York Girls Soccer Players of the Year Shae O'Rourke (2020-21, St. Mary's High School), Chloe DeLyser (2019-20 & 2018-19, Marion High School), and Molly Feighan (2017-18, Arlington 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, Howard 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. Howard 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.