

**XAVIER COLLEGE PREP STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ARIZONA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 23, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Bella Leonard** of **Xavier College Prep** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Arizona Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Leonard is the fourth Gatorade Arizona Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Xavier College Prep.

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 Leonard as Arizona'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, Leonard joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Alyssa Thompson (2020-21, Harvard-Westlake School, Calif.), Mallory Swanson (2014-15, Mountain Vista High School, Colo.), Heather O'Reilly (2002-03 & 2001-02, East Brunswick High School, N.J.) and Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy School of Young Women, N.Y.).

The 5-foot-9 senior midfielder led the Gators to a 16-0 record and a third-straight Conference 6A state championship this past season. Leonard scored 10 goals and passed for 11 assists, including a pair of helpers in Xavier Prep's 4-1 win over Perry High School in the state final. A three-time Conference 6A First Team All-State selection, she is ranked as the nation's No. 62 recruit by TopDrawerSoccer.com.

Leonard spearheaded the St. Vincent DePaul canned food drive that produced more than 600,000 cans and over \$60,000 in cash donations. She has also volunteered locally at a food bank and shelter for the unhoused in addition to donating her time as a youth soccer coach. "Bella is a dynamic player who can play anywhere," said Jen White, head coach of Pinnacle High School. "She is dangerous in any spot on the field."

Leonard has maintained a weighted 4.31 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Notre Dame 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.

Leonard joins recent Gatorade Arizona Girls Soccer Players of the Year Tatum Thomason (2021-22, Liberty High School), Maggie Cagle (2020-21, Arcadia High School), Isabella Struckman (2019-20, Chaparral High School), and Keeley Bond (2018-19, Chaparral High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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