

**EPISCOPAL COLLEGIATE SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Samantha De Luca** of **Episcopal Collegiate School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Arkansas Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. De Luca is the first Gatorade Arkansas Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Episcopal Collegiate 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 De Luca as Arkansas' 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, De Luca 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-5 senior forward led the Wildcats to a 17-1 record and the 3A state title this past season. A two-time Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Player of the Year, De Luca racked up 60 goals and 17 assists. She scored all three of Episcopal Collegiate School's goals in the state championship game and was named MVP.

De Luca has volunteered locally with the Ozark Mission Project, a non-profit organization that assists individuals and families in need of minor construction work or landscaping. She also has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Samantha's vision of the field and movement off the ball was that of a next-level player," said Diana Judd, Lakeside High School head coach. "She was quick and sharp with the ball. She knew when to take the ball herself and when to pass. She's a very dangerous player on the field in so many ways, and while I hated how she single-handedly beat us, I loved watching her ability."

De Luca has maintained a 3.73 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Saint Louis University 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.

De Luca joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Girls Soccer Players of the Year Kate Carter (2021-22, Bentonville West High School), Sophie Nash (2020-21, North Little Rock High School), and Kailyn 'KK' Pavatt (2019-20 & 2018-19, Conway 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.