

**MCDONOGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MARYLAND GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June, 23, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Kelsey Smith** of **McDonogh School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Maryland Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Smith is the sixth Gatorade Maryland Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from McDonogh 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 Maryland'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-3 senior forward led the Eagles to a 16-2 record and the Independent Athletic Association of Maryland Class A Tournament championship this past season. Smith scored 19 goals and passed for three assists. The 2021 Baltimore Sun Metro Player of the Year, Smith returned to the field this September after missing more than a year with an ACL injury. Ranked as the nation's No. 71 recruit in the Class of 2022 by TopDrawerSoccer.com, she concluded her prep soccer career with 39 goals.

Smith has volunteered locally with Happy Helpers, a group that supports the homeless in Baltimore, and she has donated her time as a youth soccer coach. "Kelsey was by far the most impactful player in the state for her team," said Doug Pryor, head coach of Mercy Academy. "It was amazing just to see her return at a high level from her ACL injury."

Smith has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Maryland 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Soccer Players of the Year Payton Patrick (2020-21, Hereford High School), Baylee DeSmit (2019-20, McDonogh School), Ada Clare Tempert (2018-19, Mercy High School), and Abbey Burdette (2017-18, Urbana 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](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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