

**ARDREY KELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Taylor Suarez** of **Ardrey Kell High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Player of the Year**. Suarez is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Ardrey Kell 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 Suarez as North Carolina'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, Suarez 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-5 sophomore forward scored 18 goals and passed for 12 assists this past season, leading the Knights (25-2-1) to the Class 4A state championship game. Suarez tallied five goals and six assists in six postseason games and scored Kell's only goal in a 2-1 loss to Cardinal Gibbons High on penalty kicks in the state final. The 2022 North Carolina Soccer Coaches Association Player of the Year, she missed eight regular-season matches while playing for the U.S. Soccer Under-17 Women's National Team as it qualified for this October's U17 World Cup.

A member of her local chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Suarez has volunteered locally as a youth soccer referee. "Taylor's skill on the ball is amazing," said Tony Dubois, head coach of Broughton High School. "She put her teammates in great positions to score and is the difference (between a .500 team) and a state championship contender."

Suarez has maintained a weighted 3.50 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Suarez joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Soccer Players of the Year Asha Means (2020-21, Lake Norman Charter High School), Ayden Yates (2019-20, Lake Norman Charter High School), Marissa Hart (2018-19, Providence Day School), and Mary Elliott McCabe (2017-18, Charlotte Latin 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, Suarez 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. Suarez 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.