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**Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year:
Lauren Cheney**

Indiana soccer star named nation's top high school performer

INDIANAPOLIS (February 23, 2006) – Entering its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade® Thirst Quencher, in partnership with *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director* magazine, today announced Lauren Cheney of Ben Davis High School (Indianapolis, Ind.) as the 2005-06 Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year.

The award, which recognizes athletic achievement as well as the academic performance and overall character of its recipient, distinguishes Cheney as the nation's best high school girls soccer player. A national advisory board comprised of sportswriters and sport-specific experts from around the country selected Cheney from the more than 315,000 female high school soccer players nationwide. Cheney is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year Award, to be presented at an awards ceremony the afternoon prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

Cheney, a 5-foot-8-inch forward, led Ben Davis with 35 goals and 15 assists this season. She was named first-team All-Conference, All-County and All-State, the *Indianapolis Star* Super Team Player of the Year, a PARADE All-America, and the 2005 NSCAA National High School Player of the Year. In her four-year career at Ben Davis, Lauren tallied 112 goals and 67 assists. She was a four-time Indiana All-State selection, and a three-time NSCAA All-American.

Cheney has bolstered her international résumé in the past year as well. Last summer she was the youngest member of the U.S. Under-21 National Team that won the annual Nordic Cup, the premier tournament in the world for U-21 women. Cheney scored two goals in the tournament and added an assist in each of the four matches, helping the U.S. to an unprecedented seventh straight Nordic Cup title. In January, Cheney scored four goals in the U.S. U-20 National Team's five CONCACAF qualifying contests, propelling the Americans to the tournament title and a spot in the 2006 FIFA U-20 Women's World Championship to be held in Russia later this year.

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In addition to her athletic exploits, Cheney is also an achiever in the classroom, with a 3.1 GPA and 1410 SAT score. She will attend UCLA this fall on a soccer scholarship.

“I have coached both boys and girls over the last nine years at various levels, and Lauren is by far the most talented player I’ve coached or watched play,” says Ben Davis head coach Sean Bosley. “She is very strong on the ball, knows how to get others involved in the game, and she knows how to score. She is one of the most competitive athletes I have ever coached.”

“Without question, Lauren is deserving of recognition as the nation’s best high school girls soccer player based on her performance and the tremendous ability she’s demonstrated,” said Gatorade Senior Vice President of Sports Marketing Tom Fox. “But she is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young players of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. She represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient.”

The Gatorade Player of the Year program recognizes one winner in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and awards one National Player of the Year in five boys sports (football, soccer, basketball, baseball, track & field) and five girls sports (volleyball, soccer, basketball, softball, track & field). In addition to athletic performance, award criteria include achievement in the classroom and overall character. Previous Gatorade National Player of the Year award winners in all sports include:

- Two-time NFL Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- Captain of the U.S. men’s national soccer team Claudio Reyna
- Reigning American League Most Valuable Player Alex Rodriguez
- Beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Reigning 200-meter world champion Allyson Felix

For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information and lists of past winners and future announcement dates, visit www.gatorade.com/playeroftheyear.

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ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONOREES

Year	Name	High School/Location	Status
2005-06	Lauren Cheney	Ben Davis/Indianapolis, IN	HS Senior/U.S. National Team
2004-05	Amy Rodriguez	Santa Margarita/Rancho Santa Margarita, CA	USC/U.S. National Team
2003-04	Ashlyn Harris	Satellite/Satellite Beach, FL	UNC/U.S. U-21 National Team
2002-03	Heather O'Reilly	East Brunswick/East Brunswick, NJ	UNC/U.S. National Team
2001-02	Jill Oakes	Harvard Westlake/North Hollywood, CA	UCLA/U.S. National Team
2000-01	Mary McDowell	Wheat Ridge/Wheat Ridge, CO	UNC Grad.
1999-00	Aleisha Cramer	Green Mountain/Lakewood, CO	BYU Grad.
1998-99	Christie Welsh	Massapequa/Massapequa, NY	U.S. National Team
1997-98	Aly Wagner	Presentation/San Jose, CA	U.S. National Team