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**WEST FARGO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NORTH DAKOTA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2010) — In its 25<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Kacie Johnson of West Fargo High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year. Johnson is the first Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from West Fargo 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 Johnson as North Dakota's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Johnson joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Alicia Hollowell (2000-01, Fairfield HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Angela Tincher (2002-03, James River HS, Va.) and Kenzie Fowler (2006-07, Canyon del Oro HS, Ariz.).

The 5-foot-7 junior pitcher and center fielder led the Packers (30-2) to a 13th straight Class A state championship this past season, posting a 19-1 record and a 1.10 earned run average in the pitching circle while recording 141 strikeouts and issuing just 22 walks. Johnson recorded four no-hitters, including one in the state semifinals against Bishop Ryan, as well as a perfect game, allowing only 47 hits in 114.1 innings. At the plate, the three-time First Team All-State selection batted .547 with five home runs, 13 doubles, 42 runs scored, 40 RBI and a .874 slugging percentage.

The 25th anniversary year of the Gatorade Player of the Year Program in 2009-10 marks the first year girls softball honors are being awarded in North Dakota, which recently sanctioned the sport as a state-championship athletic event at the prep level. Johnson has maintained a weighted 3.94 GPA in the classroom. A member of the West Fargo High School student council and the area's Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, Johnson is vice president of her school's junior class and served as a member of the Prom Committee.

"Kacie Johnson understands the game—she knows the small things," said Terry Greenland, Johnson's coach with the Dakota Impact Amateur Athletics Union club program. "Her basic understanding of the game really helps her. She knows where to place the ball on certain hitters and uses her changeup to keep hitters off-balance. She's lethal at the plate when she swings at her pitch. When she waits for her pitch to come to her, she's going to hit it hard every single time."

Johnson will begin her senior 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 ESPN RISE and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners, and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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