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Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® CALIFORNIA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Rachel Garcia of Highland High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year. Garcia is the first Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Highland 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 Garcia as California's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Garcia 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 sophomore right-handed pitcher posted a 22-2 record in the circle with a 0.50 ERA this past season, leading the Bulldogs (22-2) to the Southern Section, Division III tournament. She struck out 302 batters in 139 innings pitched, allowing 42 hits and 24 walks with 14 shutouts and four no-hitters. At the plate, Garcia batted .709 with 13 home runs, 12 doubles, 42 RBI and a 1.380 slugging percentage. She produced more extra-base hits (26) than outs (23) on the year.

Garcia has maintained a weighted 3.83 GPA in the classroom. An avid guitar player, she has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach.

"Rachel Garcia is dominant because she pitches 68-70 mph with command of all her pitches," said Marty Tyson, Garcia's summer coach with the Corona Angels. "As a hitter, she has great bat speed. She is a dominant player in high school because it's hard to pitch and be the best hitter on the team."

Garcia has made a verbal commitment to play softball at UCLA on an athletic scholarship beginning in the fall of 2015.

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 high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Garcia joins recent Gatorade California Softball Players of the Year Emily Lockman (2011-12, Norco High School), Cheyenne Cordes (2010-11, Rodriguez High School), Jessica Hall (2009-10, Ayala), Keilani Ricketts (2008-09, Archbishop Mitty), Jessica Spigner (2007-08, Valencia), and Jordan Taylor (2006 - 07, Valencia) among the state's list of former award winners.

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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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