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**HALEYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ALABAMA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2014) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Holly Ward of Haleyville High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Alabama Softball Player of the Year. Ward is the first Gatorade Alabama Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Haleyville 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 Ward as Alabama's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Ward 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 6-foot senior right-handed pitcher led the Lions (34-17) to third place in the Class 4A state tournament this past season. Ward owned a 25-9 record and 0.80 ERA in the circle, along with a .432 batting average, eight home runs and 64 RBI at the plate. Ward also struck out 335 batters in 219.1 innings while scattering 66 hits. A member of the Super All-State Team, she was MVP of the Class 4A state tournament in 2012 and 2013 and is a three-time All-State honoree.

Ward has maintained a 3.82 GPA in the classroom. Co-editor of her school's yearbook, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Red Cross, the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program and as a youth softball instructor.

"Ward is a terrific presence on the field and on the mound," said Patrick Sutton, head coach at Hamilton High. "She has a lot of velocity and multiple pitches. She hits her spots and she never gets rattled. She's also a terrific hitter and a big part of their offense. It's scary to face her with runners on base."

Ward has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Mississippi State University 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 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.

Ward joins recent Gatorade Alabama Softball Players of the Year Kasey Cooper (2012-13, Dothan High School), Haylie McCleney (2011-12, Mortimer Jordan High School), Shelby Holley (2010-11, Pisgah High School), Leigh Streetman (2009-10, Hueytown), Heather Parker (2008-09, Mortimer Jordan), Lindsey Dunlap (2007-08, Hueytown), and Meghan Harbuck (2006-07, Baker) 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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