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**MAPLE GROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA 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 Sydney Smith of Maple Grove Senior High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year. Smith is the first Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Maple Grove Senior 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 Smith as Minnesota's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Smith 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 junior right-handed pitcher compiled a 19-1 record and a 0.59 ERA in the circle for the Crimson (20-2) at the time of her selection. Through 22 games, Smith fanned 232 batters against just 30 walks in 130 innings pitched. Also a first baseman, Smith owned a .578 batting average with 15 extra-base hits, 17 runs scored and 24 RBI entering the Class AAA state tournament. A returning Class AAA First Team All-State selection as named by the Minnesota Fastpitch Coaches Association, she was a member of the Beverly Bandits during the team's Premier Girls Fastpitch 16U National Championship campaign this past summer.

Smith has maintained a B average in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a youth softball instructor, she has volunteered as part of numerous efforts to benefit the Minneapolis metropolitan area's homeless community in coordination with Church of the Open Door, Feed My Starving Children and Kids Against Hunger.

"She never lets the pressure get to her," said Maple Grove head coach Jim Koltes. "She performs on the biggest stages and makes it look easy. Sydney is always in control, enjoys the pressures of the biggest tests and thrives on wanting to win. She is extremely humble and takes nothing for granted. She works hard to stay on top of her game, and all the while never feels the need to act like she is above anybody."

Smith has verbally committed to play softball on an athletic scholarship at Louisiana State University 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Softball Players of the Year Hannah Heacox (2012-13, Stillwater Area High School), Nikki Anderson (2011-12, Brainerd High School), Kelsey Anderson (2010-11, Burnsville High School), Sara Moulton (2009-10 & 2008-09, Eagan), Chelsey Durland (2007-08, Orono), and Brynne Dordel (2006-07, Chaska) 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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