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**RIO RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NEW MEXICO SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2014) — In its 29<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Nicole Pendley of Rio Rancho High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade New Mexico Softball Player of the Year. Pendley is the second Gatorade New Mexico Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rio Rancho 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 Pendley as New Mexico's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Pendley 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-5 senior left-handed pitcher and center fielder led the Rams (28-4) to the Class 5A state championship this past season. Pendley owned a 21-2 record and a 2.01 ERA in the circle, along with a .582 batting average, 14 home runs and 50 RBI at the plate. A three-time First Team All-State selection, she also had 14 doubles, seven triples and 22 stolen bases.

Pendley has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs.

"Pendley is impossible to get out," said Jimmy Hernandez, head coach at West Mesa High. "Even if you don't put the ball in the strike zone, she can still hit it out. She dominates at whatever she does. It's an easy sport when you have that kind of talent."

Pendley has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma 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.

Pendley joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Softball Players of the Year Jasmine Casados (2012-13, La Cueva High School), Katera Eltsosie (2011-12, Volcano Vista High School), Karysta Donisthorpe (2010-11 & 2009-10, Piedra Vista High School), Melissa Martinez (2008-09 & 2007-08, Cibola) and Karisa Medrano (2006-07, St. Pius X) 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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