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**GATORADE® NATIONAL SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR:**  
**RACHEL GARCIA**

*Two-time Gold Medalist Surprises Standout with Elite Honor*

**Palmdale, Calif.** (June 18, 2015) - In its 30<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 Rachel Garcia of Highland High School (Palmdale, California) as its 2014-15 Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year. Garcia was surprised with the news at school by two-time Gold Medalist and former UCLA Bruin Stacey Nuveman.

"Rachel really deserves to be this year's Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year because she embodies everything the award stands for," said Nuveman. "Not only has Rachel excelled on the diamond, but she's also a stellar student and is a positive influence in the community. I'm excited to follow her career and watch all the things she will accomplish in the future."

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 the nation's best high school softball player. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select Garcia from more than 364,000 high school softball players nationwide. Garcia is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The 2012-13 Gatorade State Player of the Year, the 5-foot-7 senior right-handed pitcher posted a 26-2 record in the circle along with a 0.20 ERA this past season, leading the Bulldogs (28-3) to the Southern Section, Division IV tournament championship game. Garcia struck out 418 batters in 175 innings pitched, allowing just 37 hits and 13 walks while throwing 20 shutouts, including 10 no-hitters and five perfect games. A member of the USA Softball Junior Women's National team, Garcia batted .667 with 20 home runs, 57 RBIs and a 1.412 slugging percentage.

Garcia has maintained a weighted 3.44 GPA in the classroom. An accomplished guitarist, she has volunteered locally at Valley Oasis, a shelter for abused women and children, and as a youth softball coach for the City of Palmdale. Also a math tutor for her teammates, she helped create the Golden League Gives Back, an initiative through which Golden League softball programs contribute goods and services to the Grace Resource Center for the needy in Lancaster. An active parishioner of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Garcia has donated her time fundraising for the non-profit Highland Softball

Boosters organization in addition to conducting free pitching lessons to girls from area families battling financial hardship.

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"Rachel Garcia is one of the finest pitching talents we've seen this decade," said Derek Allister, vice president of OnDeck Softball, a national scouting and recruiting service. "Not only does she possess excellent velocity, movement and location, but she also owns the unflappable demeanor that will allow her to survive the up-and-down nature of pitching at the highest levels in college. And while she locks down opposing hitters, she's also shown remarkable offensive prowess. This spring, she had a monster year with the bat, and that separates her from many other great high school pitching prospects. She is going to make a huge impact at the next level."

Garcia has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on an athletic scholarship at UCLA beginning this fall.

"Rachel is an exceptional student-athlete who has earned recognition as the nation's best high school softball player while also excelling in the classroom and making a difference in her community," said Gatorade Chief Marketing Officer Morgan Flatley. "Rachel's statistics on the diamond speak for themselves, but even more impressive is the impact she has had on her teammates and the example she sets for younger student-athletes. Rachel represents everything we look to celebrate in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient."

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.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- NFL all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith
- Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Four-time track & field gold medalist Allyson Felix

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at

<http://www.gatorade.com/poy>, on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

**ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL SOFTBALL PLAYERS OF THE YEAR**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
2014-15	Rachel Garcia	Highland High School/Palmdale, CA	High School Senior
2013-14	Taylor McQuillin	Mission Viejo High School/Mission Viejo, CA	High School Senior
2012-13	Carley Hoover	D.W. Daniel High School/Central, SC	Stanford University
2011-12	Geri Ann Glasco	Oconee County High/Watkinsville, GA	University of Georgia
2010-11	Paige McDuffee	The Woodlands/Woodlands, TX	UCLA
2009-10	Kasey Fagan	Dunnellon/Dunnellon, FL	University of Florida
2008-09	Kenzie Fowler	Canyon del Oro/Oro Valley, AZ	University of Arizona
2007-08	Kenzie Fowler	Canyon del Oro/Oro Valley, AZ	University of Arizona
2006-07	Ashley Brignac	John Curtis Christian School/ River Ridge, LA	Univ. of Louisiana - Lafayette
2005-06	Kirsten Shortridge	Keller/Keller, TX	LSU
2004-05	Dani Hofer	Palm Harbor Univ./Palm Harbor, FL	LSU Graduate
2003-04	Anjelica Selden	Vanden/Fairfield, CA	UCLA Coaching Staff
2002-03	Lisa Dodd	University City/San Diego, CA	Univ. of Nevada Coaching Staff
2001-02	Alicia Hollowell	Fairfield/Fairfield, CA	Former U.S. National Team
2000-01	Cat Osterman	Cypress Falls/Houston, TX	U.S. National Team
1999-00	Tia Bollinger	Mater Dei/Santa Ana, CA	Univ. of Washington Graduate
1998-99	Maureen LeCocq	Chaminade Prep/West Hills, CA	Stanford Univ. Graduate
1997-98	Amanda Freed	Pacifica/Garden Grove, CA	Former U.S. National Team

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