

Contact: Jason Belenke (312-729-3631)

**POPE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® GEORGIA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 4, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Kelly Barnhill of Pope High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade Georgia Softball Player of the Year. Barnhill is the first Gatorade Georgia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pope 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 Barnhill as Georgia's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Barnhill 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-8 senior right-hander led the Greyhounds (32-8) to the Class 6A state championship this past season. The Class 6A Pitcher of the Year, Barnhill posted a 29-5 record with a 0.59 ERA in the circle, striking out a state-record 534 batters in 226 innings pitched. She also threw seven no-hitters and contributed a school-record nine home runs at the plate. Ranked as the nation's No. 2 player in the Class of 2015 by FullCountSoftball, Barnhill is a three-time First Team All-State honoree and has been selected to play for the USA Softball Junior Women's National Team.

Barnhill has maintained a 4.26 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered as a science fair judge and youth softball instructor and has donated her time on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program.

"Barnhill is just overpowering," said Mickey Harper, head coach at Chapel Hill High. "She's dominant on the mound and she plays with grit and tenacity. She's almost impossible to hit."

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

Barnhill joins recent Gatorade Georgia Softball Players of the Year Meghan Gregg (2013-14 & 2012-13, Flint River Academy), Geri Ann Glasco (2011-12, Oconee County High School), Kelsey Mericka (2010-11, Kell High School), Lori Spingola (2009-10, Marist School), Hope Rush (2008-09, Eagle's Landing Christian Academy), Kelli Wheeler (2007-08, Lassiter), and Alicia Mills (2006-07, Sequoyah) 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.

###