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## **MAPLE GROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE® MINNESOTA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 4, 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 Sydney Smith of Maple Grove Senior High School as its 2014-15 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 senior right-handed pitcher led the Crimson to a 22-2 record and a berth in the Class AAA state tournament at the time of her selection. The state's returning Gatorade Softball Player of the Year, Smith owned an 18-0 record with one save, a 0.18 ERA and 218 strikeouts against just 21 walks in 126.2 innings pitched entering the postseason round of eight. Also a first baseman, Smith batted .507 with four home runs, 19 runs scored and 25 RBI through 24 games. A two-time returning Class AAA First Team All-State honoree as named by the Minnesota Fastpitch Coaches Association, she worked 12 walks and added nine doubles, recording a .601 on-base percentage and a .795 slugging percentage.

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

"She has been a dominating player for the past three years as Maple Grove's pitcher," said Bryan Woodley, head coach of rival Champlin Park High. "Plus, she is a very good offensive player as well. Because of Sydney's dominance, Maple Grove is in a position to win a state championship. Her confidence and leadership spreads throughout her team. She is also humble in her accomplishments."

Smith has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Louisiana 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.

Two-time winner Smith joins 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 High School), Chelsey Durland (2007-08, Orono High School) and Brynne Dordel (2006-07, Chaska High School) 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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