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**MERCED HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® CALIFORNIA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 2, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Madilyn "Bubba" Nickles of Merced High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year. Nickles is the first Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Merced 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 Nickles as California's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Nickles 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-handed pitcher and shortstop compiled a 20-5 record in the circle along with a 0.63 ERA this past season, leading the Bears (22-7) to the semifinals of the Sac-Joaquin Division I Tournament in the one-loss elimination bracket. Nickles struck out 308 batters in 167.1 innings pitched, allowing 81 hits and issuing just 28 walks en route to nine shutouts and three no-hitters. At the plate, she batted .552 with 20 doubles, eight home runs and 27 RBI to finish with a 1.126 slugging percentage and zero strikeouts in 104 plate appearances. Nickles was the only junior on the 2015 USA Junior National Team and she was the only high-school-age player invited to train with the 2016 USA Women's National Elite Team.

Nickles has maintained a 3.95 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her school's Rotary International Interact Club. Nickles has also donated her time generously to youth players, serving as a volunteer assistant for the past four years with both ASA Development Camps as well as Nike Softball Camps. In addition, she has coached and advised area U-12 to U-14 players on an individual basis and served as an instructor at USA Softball Youth Camps.

"I have coached for over 20 years and I have not seen an athlete of Madilyn Nickles' caliber," said Jill Ogden, head coach of Turlock High. "She is the type of player that you know your team has to be perfect against just to have a chance. She is the complete package."

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

Nickles joins recent Gatorade California Softball Players of the Year Rachel Garcia (2014-15 & 2012-2013, Highland High School), Taylor McQuillin (2013-14, Mission Viejo High School), Rachel Garcia (2012-13, Highland High School), Emily Lockman (2011-12, Norco High School), Cheyenne Cordes, (2010-11, Rodriguez High School), Jessica Hall, (2009-10, Ayala High School), Keilani Ricketts (2008-09, Archbishop Mitty High School), Jessica Spigner (2007-08, Valencia High School), and Jordan Taylor, (2006-07, Valencia 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.

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