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**Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)**

**DOWNERS GROVE SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® ILLINOIS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 2, 2016) — In its 31<sup>st</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Caroline Hedgcock of Downers Grove South High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year. Hedgcock is the first Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Downers Grove South 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 Hedgcock as Illinois's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Hedgcock 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.).

At the time of her selection, the 5-foot-7 senior left-handed pitcher owned a 10-0 record in the circle along with a 0.55 ERA, leading the Mustangs (32-3) to the Class 4A Plainfield East Sectional tournament semifinals. Hedgcock fanned 102 batters in 63.1 innings pitched, allowing just 23 hits. A 2015 First Team All-State honoree, Hedgcock batted .528 with 20 home runs and 61 RBI through 35 games. She banded out seven doubles and scored 53 runs in that span, posting a .593 on-base percentage and a 1.160 slugging percentage.

Hedgcock has maintained a weighted 3.98 GPA in the classroom. An avid trumpet and guitar player, she has volunteered locally with Feed My Starving Children and as a youth softball coach.

"What makes Caroline very successful and dominant in the circle is her ability to set up a hitter," said Marcy Corbett, head coach of Addison Trail High. "It takes a few adjustments to get comfortable with a dominant lefty pitcher. But a hitter doesn't have the time to make those adjustments against Caroline because she is already setting the table with her pitches."

Hedgcock has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Hedgcock joins recent Gatorade Illinois Softball Players of the Year Taylor Johnson (2014-15, Beecher High School), Dale Ryndak (2013-14, Downers Grove North High School), Abby Ramirez (2012-13, Trinity High School), Lilly Fecho (2011-12, Glenbard North High School), Brianna LeBeau (2010-11, Richards High School), Kirsten Verdun, (2009-10, Coal City High School), Emily Norton (2008-09, Oak Forest High School), Stephanie Kirkpatrick (2007-08, Plainfield Central High School), and Suzie Rzegocki, (2006-07, Lemont 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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