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**WELLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® KANSAS 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 Ryleigh Buck of Wellington High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year. Buck is the first Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Wellington 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 Buck as Kansas's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Buck 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-9 senior shortstop compiled a .634 batting average with five home runs and 37 RBI this past season, leading the Crusaders (17-6) to the Class 4A-Division I state tournament quarterfinals. Buck banged out 12 doubles, five triples, scored 53 runs and stole 38 bases in 38 attempts to lead Wellington to its first state tournament berth in 21 years. A member of the Team USA Women's National Baseball Team, she finished the season with a .714 on-base percentage and a 1.155 slugging percentage while committing just two errors in the field.

Buck maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and graduated last month as her class valedictorian. She has volunteered locally with Students Against Destructive Decisions and as an elementary school tutor.

"Wellington has had a breakthrough season and Ryleigh has been the catalyst for their success," said Chuck Schrader, head coach of Clearwater High. "Offensively she can hit for power and average and comes up with the big hit when her team needs it most. On the defensive side of the ball she handles the left side of the infield. She has outstanding range and a strong throwing arm."

Buck has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Central Florida 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.

Buck joins recent Gatorade Kansas Softball Players of the Year Brittany Finney (2014-15, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School), Allison Stewart (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Olathe East High School), Shelby Davis, (2010-11, Goddard High School), Kelsey Stewart, (2009-10, Arkansas City High School), Nikki Armagost (2008-09, Andover Central High School), Paige Ladenburger (2007-08, Washburn Rural High School), and Eranne Daugharthy, (2006-07, Olathe East 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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