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**NESHOBA CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI 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 Aspen Wesley of Neshoba Central High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year. Wesley is the second Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Neshoba Central 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 Wesley as Mississippi's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Wesley 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-4 freshman right-handed pitcher led the Rockets to a 27-1 record and a fourth consecutive Class 5A state championship this past season. Wesley did not allow an earned run in eight Class 5A state tournament games, including a pair of shutouts in a two-game finals' sweep of West Harrison. A three-time Clarion-Ledger First Team All-State selection, Wesley finished with a 24-1 record, posting a 0.23 ERA and amassing 294 strikeouts in 155 innings pitched. She also batted .338 with five extra-base hits and 17 RBI.

Wesley has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of her school's Spanish and Bible clubs, she has also volunteered on behalf of her church and as a youth softball instructor.

"Aspen is a very dedicated and hardworking student-athlete," said Neshoba Central head coach Trae Embry. "She believes in hard work and especially works hard at her pitching. She is a very special talent that loves to compete and loves her teammates."

Wesley will begin her sophomore year of high school 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.

Wesley joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Softball Players of the Year Hailey Lunderman (2014-15, Neshoba Central High School), Darby Bishop (2013-14, Newton County High School), Rachel Hickman (2012-13, Poplarville High School), Kelly Young (2011-12, Madison Central High School), Emily Davis, (2010-11, Newton County High School), Londen Ladner, (2009-10 & 2008-09, Northwest Rankin High School), and Whitney Kiihnl (2007-08 & 2006-07, South Panola 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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