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**OAK PARK & RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® ILLINOIS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Chardonnay Harris of Oak Park & River Forest High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year. Harris is the first Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Oak Park & River Forest 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 Harris 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, Harris joins an elite alumni association of past state softball award-winners, including Catherine Osterman (2000-01, Cy Spring High School, Texas), Kelsey Stewart (2009-10, Arkansas City High School, Kan.), Carley Hoover (2012-13 D.W. Daniel High School, S.C.), Jenna Lilley (2012-13, Hoover High School, Ohio), Morgan Zerkle (2012-13 Cabell Midland High School, W. Va.), and Rachel Garcia (2014-15, Highland High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-10 senior left-handed pitcher had led the Huskies to a 32-1 record at the time of her selection. Harris owned a 14-0 mark in the circle with a 0.16 earned run average and 170 strikeouts in 88.2 innings pitched through 33 games. She had allowed 26 hits and walked just seven. At the plate, Harris had posted a .551 batting average with seven doubles, seven home runs, 48 RBI and a .933 slugging percentage. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she was the 2016 Pioneer Press Player of the Year after leading the Huskies to the state title.

Harris has volunteered locally with Opportunity Knocks, an organization that provides programming for teens and young adults with developmental disabilities. She has also donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Chardonnay is an excellent pitcher and she has a variety of pitches," said Josh Sanew, head coach of Glenbard North High School. "She throws very hard but she can hit all of her spots and she has a great change-up. She is capable of striking out any hitter which makes her extremely dangerous because she can work out of any jam."

Harris has maintained a 3.08 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Auburn University 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Harris joins recent Gatorade Illinois Softball Players of the Year Caroline Hedgcock (2015-16, Downers Grove South High School), 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.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Chardonnay will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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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