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EAST CARTER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE® KENTUCKY SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 5, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Montana Fouts of East Carter High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Kentucky Softball Player of the Year. Fouts is the first Gatorade Kentucky Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Carter 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 Fouts as Kentucky's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Fouts 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-2 junior right-handed pitcher and first baseman had led the Raiders to a 31-3 record at the time of her selection. Fouts owned a 24-2 mark in the circle to go with a 0.30 earned run average. She amassed 372 strikeouts in 163 innings pitched through 34 games. She had allowed 40 hits and issued just 15 walks en route to 10 no-hitters, including five perfect games. At the plate, Fouts owned a .588 batting average with 13 doubles, 10 home runs, 39 runs scored, 56 RBI and a 1.029 slugging percentage.

Fouts has volunteered locally with the Wounded Warrior Project and as a youth softball coach. "Montana has been phenomenal this year," said Scott Ingram, head coach of Ashland Blazer High School. "She is tough to go up against. She just attacks the strike zone and dares you to beat her. Which most can't."

Fouts has maintained a weighted 3.66 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Alabama beginning in the fall of 2018.

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.

Two-time winner Fouts joins Gatorade Kentucky Softball Players of the Year Megan Hensley (2014-15 & 2013-14, Paul G. Blazer High School), Jessica Adell (2012-13, Ballard High School), Allison Foster (2011-12, Christian Academy of Louisville), Griffin Joiner (2010-11, Christian County High School), Emily Gaines (2009-10, South Laurel High School), Megan Taylor (2008-09, North Laurel High School), and Kirsten Allen (2007-08 & 2006-07, Ryle High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Montana 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.

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