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**LEONARDTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MARYLAND 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 Kaitlin Beasley-Polko of Leonardtown High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Maryland Softball Player of the Year. Beasley-Polko is the first Gatorade Maryland Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Leonardtown 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 Beasley-Polko as Maryland's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Beasley-Polko 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-6 senior right-handed pitcher posted a 21-2 record in the circle with a 0.36 earned run average this past season, leading the Raiders (21-2) to the Class 4A East Region championship game. Beasley-Polko allowed just 43 hits and struck out 331 batters in 157 innings pitched. She fired six no-hitters, including one perfect game, and 15 shutouts. At the plate, Beasley-Polko batted .590 with eight doubles, a .640 on-base percentage and a .794 slugging percentage. A two-time Washington Post All-Met selection, she concluded her prep softball career with 1,066 strikeouts.

Beasley-Polko has volunteered locally at the Forrest Career and Technology Center, which promotes protecting the environment, and she has donated her time to numerous community beautification projects. "Kaitlin can completely take over a game from the circle on any given day," said Mike Johnson, head coach of Huntingtown High. "And at the plate she is one of the better hitters in our conference. Not as dominant as with her pitching but a bat that all opposing pitchers have to look out for."

Beasley-Polko has maintained a weighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Coastal Carolina 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.

Beasley-Polko joins recent Gatorade Maryland Softball Players of the Year Madison Aughinbaugh (2015-16, St. Mary's Ryken High School), Nicole Stockinger (2014-15, Sherwood High School), Jordan Cargile (2013-14, Eastern Technical High School), Jess Cummings (2012-13 & 2011-12, Northern High School), Kaitlyn Schmeiser (2010-11, Northern High School), Kourtney Salvarola (2009-10, Broadneck High School), Melanie Mitchell (2008-09, McDonough High School), Lauren Gibson (2007-08, Chesapeake High School), and Kerry Hickey (2006-07, Huntingtown High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kaitlin 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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