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**MILLARD SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® NEBRASKA 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 Rylie Unzicker of Millard South High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Nebraska Softball Player of the Year. Unzicker is the third Gatorade Nebraska Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Millard South 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 Unzicker as Nebraska's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Unzicker 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 center fielder led the Patriots (29-7) to the Class A state championship this past season. Unzicker compiled a .500 batting average with 18 home runs, 47 RBI and 57 runs scored. A four-time First Team All-State selection, she was named honorary captain of the Omaha World-Herald All-Nebraska team and co-captain of the Lincoln Journal Star Super-State team.

Unzicker has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, youth softball clinics and Kids Against Hunger. "Rylie Unzicker was probably the best player in the state in both her junior and senior years," said K.C. Hehnke, head coach at Grand Island High. "Her bat speed is second to none, and her defense is outstanding. She plays hard every day and she can play any position asked of her."

Unzicker has maintained a 3.89 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Nebraska 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.

Unzicker joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Softball Players of the Year Samantha Dellinger (2015-16, Papillion-La Vista High School), Erin Lockhart (2014-15, Lincoln Southeast High School), Kaylan Jablonski (2013-14, Skutt Catholic High School), Madi Unzicker (2012-13, Millard South High School), Alicia Armstrong (2011-12, Beatrice High School), Allie Mathewson (2010-11, Papillion-La Vista South High School), Becca Changstrom (2009-10 & 2008-09, Lincoln Southwest High School), and Ashley Hagemann (2007-08 & 2006-07, Elkhorn High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Rylie 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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