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**NORTH KINGSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® RHODE ISLAND 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 Kiara Oliver of North Kingstown High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Rhode Island Softball Player of the Year. Oliver is the second Gatorade Rhode Island Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from North Kingstown 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 Oliver as Rhode Island's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Oliver 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 Softball Player of the Year, the 5-foot-5 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Skippers to a 16-2 record at the time of her selection. Oliver posted a 14-1 mark in the circle with a 0.16 earned run average and 181 strikeouts in 85 innings pitched through 18 games. She had surrendered just 27 hits and walked 19 en route to four no-hitters, including two perfect games. At the plate, the three-time First Team All-State selection owned a .509 batting average with six doubles, four triples, five home runs, 29 RBI and a 1.036 slugging percentage.

Oliver has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach and as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her church. "Kiara is an excellent hitter, but she is totally dominant in the circle," said Paul Kennedy, head coach of Pilgrim High. "She controls the game unlike anyone else currently can."

Oliver has maintained a 3.27 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Massachusetts 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.

Two-time winner Oliver joins Gatorade Rhode Island Softball Players of the Year Rachel Kantor (2014-15, North Kingstown High School), Karissa Carlton (2013-14, North Smithfield High School), Lindsay Mayer (2012-13 & 2011-12, Lincoln High School), Alyssa McCoart (2010-11, Lincoln High School), Elise Fortier (2009-10, Coventry High School), Fallon Scorpio (2008-09, St. Mary Academy-Bay View High School), and Steph Morse (2007-08 & 2006-07, Warwick Veterans High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kiara 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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