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NORTH OCONEE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE GEORGIA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (May 29, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Kumar Rocker of North Oconee High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Baseball Player of the Year. Rocker is the first Gatorade Georgia Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from North Oconee 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 Rocker as Georgia's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, Rocker joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-5, 250-pound senior right-handed pitcher and first baseman compiled a 6-2 record with a 1.17 earned run average this past season, leading the Titans (22-9) to the second round of the Class AAAA state tournament. Rocker struck out 90 batters while surrendering just 19 hits and 13 walks in 46 innings pitched. Offensively, Rocker posted a .351 batting average with five home runs, 27 RBI, 15 runs scored, 15 walks and a .465 on-base percentage. A participant in both the Under Armour All-America Game and the Perfect Game All-American Classic in 2017, Rocker also won a gold medal with Team USA at the U18 World Cup. He is ranked as the nation's No. 7 recruit in the Class of 2018 by Perfect Game and the No. 5 high school MLB Draft prospect by Baseball America.

The son of former NFL defensive lineman Tracy Rocker, Rocker has volunteered locally at the Sparrow's Nest Thrift Store and Donation Center in Athens in addition to donating his time by visiting patients at local hospitals and coaching at youth baseball clinics.

"Kumar's a force to be reckoned with is the easiest way to put it," said Tom Gooch, head coach at Oconee County High School. "A lot of people overlook his hitting because he's such a dominant pitcher. He's intense, but he's humble. He leads and plays hard and sets such a good example."

Rocker has maintained a 91.47 average in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at Vanderbilt University this fall, but is projected as an early-round selection in June's Major League Baseball draft.

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.

Rocker joins recent Gatorade Georgia Baseball Players of the Year Drew Waters (2016-17, Etowah High School), Josh Lowe (2015-16, Pope High School), Dazmon Cameron (2014-15, Eagle's Landing Christian Academy), Michael Chavis (2013-14, Sprayberry High School), Clint Frazier (2012-13, Loganville High School), Byron Buxton (2011-12, Appling County High School), Matt Olson (2010-11, Parkview High School), Kaleb Cowart (2009-10, Cook High School), Zach Wheeler (2008-09, East Paulding High School), Ethan Martin (2007-08, Stephens County High School), and Josh Smoker (2006-07, Calhoun High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kumar 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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