

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)**

**BENTONVILLE WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® ARKANSAS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 4, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Hallie Wacaser of Bentonville West High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year. Wacaser is the first Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville West 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 Wacaser as Arkansas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Wacaser 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-4 sophomore shortstop and right-handed pitcher produced a .485 batting average with 10 home runs and 42 RBI this past season, leading the Wolverines (25-7) to the Class 7A state championship game. Wacaser added 13 doubles, 14 steals and scored 46 runs while compiling a .548 on-base percentage and a .970 slugging percentage. In the circle, she posted a 3-0 record with a 3.36 earned run average and 20 strikeouts in 16.2 innings pitched.

A member of the leadership team for her the Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, Wacaser has volunteered locally with the humane society and as a youth softball coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church.

Wacaser has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at Florida State University beginning in the fall of 2020.

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.

Wacaser joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Softball Players of the Year Maddy Prough (2016-17, Bentonville High School), Autumn Humes (2015-16 & 2014-15, Bald Knob High School), Andrea Kindrick (2013-14 & 2012-13, Russellville High School), Peyton Jenkins (2011-12, Bryant High School), Kimmy Beasley (2010-11, Foreman High School), Shelby Jo Fenter (2009-10, West Memphis High School), Shelby Wise (2008-09 & 2007-08, Nettleton High School), and Amanda Summerford (2006-07, Fayetteville High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hallie 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/>.