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**VALOR CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® COLORADO SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 4, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Ali Kilponen of Valor Christian High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year. Kilponen is the first Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Valor Christian 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 Kilponen as Colorado's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Kilponen 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 6-foot senior right-handed pitcher led the Eagles (22-1) to the Class 4A quarterfinals this past season. Kilponen compiled a 22-1 record with a 0.42 ERA in the circle to go with a .466 batting average, six home runs and 26 RBI. She struck out 273 batters with just 12 walks in 134 innings pitched. The four-time Class 4A Player of the Year, Kilponen won three state titles and was also named the South Metro Pitcher of the Year and the All-Colorado Player of the Year.

Kilponen has volunteered locally on behalf of youth softball programs.

Kilponen has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Louisiana State University 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.

Kilponen joins recent Gatorade Colorado Softball Players of the Year Linnie Malkin (2016-17, Broomfield High School), Haley Donaldson (2015-16, Fossil Ridge High School), Savannah Heebner (2014-15, Castle View High School), Ally Power (2013-14, Ponderosa High School), Nickie Blue (2012-13, Niwot High School), Rainey Gaffin (2011-12 & 2010-11, Legacy High School), Shelby Babcock (2009-10 & 2008-09, Legacy High School), and Mallory Duran (2007-08 & 2006-07, Windsor High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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