

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**EAST COWETA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® GEORGIA 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 Kelley Lynch of East Coweta High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Softball Player of the Year. Lynch is the first Gatorade Georgia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Coweta 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 Lynch as Georgia's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Lynch 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-9 junior right-handed pitcher and shortstop led the Indians to a perfect 36-0 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Lynch owned a 14-0 record with a 0.45 ERA in the circle and produced a .454 batting average, 10 home runs and 50 RBI. She struck out 193 batters in 93 innings pitched. The Georgia Athletic Coaches Association Player of the Year, Lynch was also named Player of the Year by the Georgia Dugout Club and is ranked as the nation's No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2019 by FloSoftball.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Lynch has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program and youth softball teams.

Lynch has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Lynch joins recent Gatorade Georgia Softball Players of the Year Keara Napoli (2016-17, Cambridge High School), Ashley Morgan (2015-16, Chapel Hill High School), Kelly Barnhill (2014-15, Pope High School), Meghan Gregg (2013-14, Flint River Academy), Megan Betsa (2012-13, Union Grove High School), Geri Ann Glasco (2011-12, Oconee County High School), Kelsey Mericka (2010-11, Kell High School), Lori Spingola (2009-10, Marist School), Hope Rush (2008-09, Eagle's Landing Christian Academy), Kelli Wheeler (2007-08, Lassiter High School), and Alicia Mills (2006-07, Sequoyah High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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