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**ST. JOSEPH-OGDEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® ILLINOIS 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 Bailey Dowling of St. Joseph-Ogden High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year. Dowling is the first Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph-Ogden 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 Dowling as Illinois' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Dowling 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-10 sophomore shortstop produced a .657 batting average with 21 home runs and 70 RBI this past season, leading the Spartans (32-4) to the Class 2A state quarterfinals. Dowling cranked 20 doubles, scored 67 runs and compiled a .728 on-base percentage and a 1.529 slugging percentage. A First Team All-State selection as a freshman, she is ranked as the No. 14 recruit in the Class of 2020 by FloSoftball and concluded her sophomore year with 42 home runs and 136 RBI in her prep career.

Dowling has volunteered locally as a youth softball and basketball coach.

Dowling has maintained a 3.38 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Alabama 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.

Dowling joins recent Gatorade Illinois Softball Players of the Year Chardonnay Harris (2016-17, Oak Park & River Forest High School), Caroline Hedgcock (2015-16, Downers Grove South High School), Taylor Johnson (2014-15, Beecher High School), Dale Ryndak (2013-14, Downers Grove North High School), Abby Ramirez (2012-13, Trinity High School), Lilly Fecho (2011-12, Glenbard North High School), Brianna LeBeau (2010-11, Richards High School), Kirsten Verdun (2009-10, Coal City), Emily Norton (2008-09, Oak Forest High School), Stephanie Kirkpatrick (2007-08, Plainfield Central High School), and Suzie Rzegocki (2006-07, Lemont Township) among the state's list of former award winners.

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