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**PLEASANT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® IOWA 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 Alexia Lara of Pleasant Valley High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Iowa Softball Player of the Year. Lara is the first Gatorade Iowa Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pleasant Valley 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 Lara as Iowa's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Lara 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-5 senior infielder and right-handed pitcher led the Spartans (35-8) to the first Class 5A state title in program history this past season. Lara batted .473 with 12 home runs and 50 RBI while walking 14 times, scoring 33 runs and posting a .523 on-base percentage. In the pitcher's circle, Lara went 12-3 with two saves while recording a 1.45 earned run average, striking out 117 batters in 107 innings. A 2017 First-Team All-State selection, Lara was named to the Class 5A All-Tournament team after closing out all three wins and hitting a game-winning home run in the ninth inning of a victory in the state quarterfinals.

A singer in the school choir, Lara has volunteered locally helping to feed the homeless at the Second Baptist Church. She has also donated her time at youth softball camps.

Lara has maintained a weighted 4.13 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Drake 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.

Lara joins recent Gatorade Iowa Softball Players of the Year Megan Weber (2016-17, Kennedy High School), Alyssa Wiebel (2015-16, Benton Community High School), DoniRae Mayhew (2014-15, Bettendorf High School), Paige Lowary (2013-14 & 2012-13, Dallas Center-Grimes High School), Riley Fisher (2011-12, East High School), Jadyn Spencer (2010-11, West High School), Jamie Fisher (2009-10, BCLUW High School), and Sammy Snygg (2008-09, 2007-08 & 2006-07, North Polk High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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