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**NORTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MASSACHUSETTS 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 Kelly Nelson of Norton High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year. Nelson is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Norton 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 Nelson as Massachusetts' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Nelson 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-11 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Lancers to a 17-1 record at the time of her selection, posting a 16-1 mark in the circle with a 0.65 ERA and 233 strikeouts in 108 innings pitched. Nelson, who owned a state-record 1,245 career strikeouts through 18 games, pitched an perfect game on April 24 against Dover-Sherborn High, striking out all 15 batters in a five-inning victory—one of 17 no-hitters, including 10 perfect games, in her prep softball career.

The vice president of her class and a member of the Norton High student council, Nelson has volunteered locally as a math tutor and as a mentor to elementary-school students through her school's PALS program.

A member of her school's math, science, history and English honor societies, Nelson has maintained a weighted 4.43 GPA the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the College of the Holy Cross 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.

Two-time winner Nelson joins Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Players of the Year Maddy Barone (2015-16, Silver Lake Regional High School), Erin Gallo (2014-15, St. Peter-Marian High School), Megan Colleran (2013-14, North Attleborough High School), Shannon Smith (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2009-10, Milford High School), Emma Mendoker (2010-11, Amherst Regional High School), Nicole D'Argento (2008-09 & 2007-08, Ashland High School), and Kara Nilan (2006-07, Taconic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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