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**BUFFALO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA 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 Emily Hansen of Buffalo High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year. Hansen is the first Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Buffalo 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 Hansen as Minnesota's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Hansen 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 senior shortstop had led the Bison to a 17-2 record and a berth in the Section 8AAAA tournament winner's bracket final at the time of her selection. Hansen produced a .543 batting average with 15 home runs, 34 runs scored and 34 runs batted in through 19 games. With 24 walks, Hansen compiled a .703 on-base percentage and a 1.587 slugging percentage. A 2017 First Team All-State selection, she had hit 38 home runs in her prep softball career entering the sectional winner's bracket final.

A member of the Future Farmers of America, Hansen has volunteered locally as a peer mentor and as a youth softball and basketball coach.

Hansen has maintained a 3.86 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Minnesota 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.

Hansen joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Softball Players of the Year Marybeth Olson (2016-17, Chanhassen High School), Carlie Brandt (2015-16, Le Sueur-Henderson High School), Sydney Smith (2014-15 & 2013-14, Maple Grove Senior High School), Hannah Heacox (2012-13, Stillwater Area High School), Nikki Anderson (2011-12, Brainerd High School), Kelsey Anderson (2010-11, Burnsville High School), Sara Moulton (2009-10 & 2008-09, Eagan High School), Chelsey Durland (2007-08, Orono High School), and Brynne Dordel (2006-07, Chaska High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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