

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**GREAT FALLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MONTANA 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 Erin Hocker of Great Falls High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Montana Softball Player of the Year. Hocker is the first Gatorade Montana Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Great Falls 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 Hocker as Montana's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Hocker 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-8 senior right-handed pitcher and first baseman led the Bison to a 22-0 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Hocker compiled a 17-0 mark in the circle with a 0.79 ERA and 147 strikeouts in 97.2 innings pitched. She was at her best in the postseason, allowing just six hits with 35 strikeouts throughout Great Falls' four-game run to the title. At the plate, Hocker produced a .294 batting average with five doubles and a .441 slugging percentage. She concluded her prep softball career with a 43-10 record and 494 strikeouts.

The secretary of the Great Falls High senior class, Hocker has been involved with the Girl Scouts since she was in kindergarten. She has volunteered locally at the Great Falls Rescue Mission and as a peer tutor.

Hocker has maintained a 3.92 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Hocker joins recent Gatorade Montana Softball Players of the Year Tristin Achenbach (2016-17 & 2015-16, C.M. Russell High School), Morgan Ray (2014-15, 2013-14 & (2012-13, Frenchtown High School), Heidi Riley (2011-12, Skyview High School), Jaimee Paffhausen (2010-11, Butte High School), Jessyka MacDonald (2009-10, Billings West High School), DJ Johnson (2008-09, Hellgate High School), Maghan Yurek (2007-08, Charles M. Russell High School), and Bobbie Lee (2006-07, Charles M. Russell High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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