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**NORTH AUGUSTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Karly Heath of North Augusta High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Carolina Softball Player of the Year. Heath is the first Gatorade South Carolina Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from North Augusta 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 Heath as South Carolina's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Heath 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 senior right-handed pitcher and shortstop led the Yellow Jackets (29-4) to the Class 4A semifinals this past season. Heath compiled a 21-2 record with a 0.16 ERA in the circle, along with a .541 batting average, 12 home runs, 30 RBI and 56 runs scored. She struck out 278 batters and issued just 17 walks with 37 hits allowed in 133.2 innings pitched. The Class 4A Player of the Year as a junior, Heath is a three-time All-State honoree and a three-time Region 4 Player of the Year.

A tutor for elementary school students, Heath has volunteered locally on behalf of youth softball camps and Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Heath has maintained a weighted 3.94 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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.

Heath joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Softball Players of the Year Bailey Betenbaugh (2016-17, Union County High School), Cayla Drotar (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Hartsville High School), Carley Hoover (2012-13 & 2011-12, D.W. Daniel High School), Leslie Jury (2010-11, 2009-10 & 2008-09, J.L. Mann Academy), Stephanie Saylor (2007-08, Wren), and Casey Faile (2006-07, Andrew Jackson) among the state's list of former award winners.

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