

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**HERBERT HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® WEST VIRGINIA 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 Delani Buckner of Herbert Hoover High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade West Virginia Softball Player of the Year. Buckner is the first Gatorade West Virginia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Herbert Hoover 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 Buckner as West Virginia's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Buckner 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-6 sophomore right-handed pitcher led the Huskies to a perfect 33-0 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Buckner compiled a 21-0 record with a 0.39 ERA in the circle, along with a .351 batting average and 19 RBI. She struck out 239 batters and issued 28 walks in 125.1 innings pitched. A Second Team All-State selection as a freshman, Buckner is also a two-time First Team All-Cardinal Conference honoree.

Buckner has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs and flood-relief efforts.

Buckner has maintained a weighted 4.49 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Buckner joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Softball Players of the Year Katie Adams (2016-17, Hurricane High School), Alexee Haynes (2015-16, Sissonville High School), Ali Burdette (2014-15, Buffalo High School), Kenna DeLancey (2013-14, Ritchie County High School), Morgan Zerkle (2012-13, Cabell Midland High School), Kylie Howard (2011-12, John Marshall High School), Ashley Knight (2010-11, Ritchie County High School), Samantha Snodgrass (2009-10, St. Albans), Andi Williamson (2008-09, Chapmanville Regional), Kiarra Chappelle (2007-08, Huntington), and Margaret Osborne (2006-07, St. Albans) among the state's list of former award winners.

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