

ROWAN COUNTY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KENTUCKY BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (May 23, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **AJ Hacker of Rowan County Senior High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Kentucky Baseball Player of the Year**. Hacker is the first Gatorade Kentucky Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rowan County Senior 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 Hacker as Kentucky's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Hacker joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-3, 195-pound senior right-handed pitcher and infielder led the Vikings to a 35-3 record and the District 61 tournament title with the Region 16 tournament set to begin May 25. In capturing District MVP honors, Hacker has compiled a 9-1 record on the mound with one save through 38 games, posting a 0.67 ERA and recording 110 strikeouts in 62.2 innings pitched. Entering regionals, he had surrendered 27 hits and issued 18 walks, holding opponents to a .122 batting average en route to a 0.730 WHIP. He also owned a .446 batting average with eight home runs and 45 RBI, posting an OPS of 1.387. In addition to drawing 10 walks and reaching base 10 times on a hit-by-pitch, he has scored 38 runs. Hacker is a 2019 Collegiate Baseball Newspaper High School First Team All-American, a 2019 Rawlings-Perfect Game All-American and a Mr. Kentucky Baseball candidate. He led Rowan County to the KHSAA state tournament for the first time in 32 years in 2017, and owns a career record of 31-12 with 385 strikeouts in 246.2 innings.

Hacker has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and on behalf of Rowan County Community Christmas, serving and cleaning up after busy holiday meals during winter break. He has also donated his time to the Rowan County Regional Quilt Show three years running, helping the committee set up display racks and later loading them to be transported and stored for the next year. In addition, Hacker has mentored and instructed youth players in association with REPS Baseball. "AJ Hacker has dominated Kentucky high school baseball for several years," said Bath County High School head coach Patrick Armitage. "His love for and dedication to the game are apparent every time he steps onto the field. As a rival coach in his district, I have witnessed AJ's competitiveness, which should translate smoothly to the next level. The sky's the limit for this young man."

Hacker has maintained a 3.84 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at Morehead State University beginning 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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Hacker joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Baseball Players of the Year Ryan Hawks (2017-18, Warren East High School), Jordan "Jo" Adell (2016-17, Ballard High School), Jaren Shelby (2015-16, Tates Creek High School), Caleb Bruner (2014-15, Logan County High School) and Kaleb Duckworth (2013-14, Henderson County High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hacker also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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