

## SOUTH WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE CONNECTICUT SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

**CHICAGO** (May 30, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Maria Hanchuk of South Windsor High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year**. Hanchuk is the first Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from South Windsor 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 Hanchuk as Connecticut's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Hanchuk 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-5 senior left-handed pitcher led the Bobcats to a 20-0 record at the time of her selection. Hanchuk compiled an 18-0 record with a 0.49 ERA in the regular season, along with a .455 batting average and 15 RBI. She surrendered just 32 hits in 115 innings while striking out 242 batters. Hanchuk is a four-time All-Conference and three-time All-State selection.

Vice President of her school's student council, Hanchuk has volunteered as a yearbook editor and as a member of the school's freshman-transition team. "Nobody has done as much as Maria Hanchuk this year," said Scott McCall, head coach at E.O. Smith High. "She's been the state's best pitcher and she's shut out some really good teams. She also really helps herself with her hitting."

Hanchuk has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. She will attend Endicott College (Mass.) this fall, where she will play softball.

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.

Hanchuk joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Softball Players of the Year Becca Johnson (2017-18, Seymour High School), Abby Abramson (2016-17, Cheshire High School), Caroline Taber (2015-16 & 2014-15, Fitch High School), and Tatum Buckley (2013-14, Masuk High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hanchuk also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###