

APPOQUINIMINK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE DELAWARE SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (May 30, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Taylor Vitola of Appoquinimink High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Delaware Softball Player of the Year**. Vitola is the first Gatorade Delaware Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Appoquinimink 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 Vitola as Delaware'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, Vitola 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 junior shortstop led the Jaguars to a 17-2 record this past season. Vitola batted .603 with 11 RBI, 31 runs scored and 24 stolen bases. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she has also been named First Team All-Conference three times.

A chemistry tutor in her school, Vitola has served as a mentor for children with physical disabilities and has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank, highway clean-up initiatives and youth sports programs. "Taylor Vitola is one of the fastest players I've seen in a long time," said Vince Clemons, head coach at St. Georges Tech. "She has a great eye at the plate, she always finds a way to put the ball in play, and if she puts it anywhere on the dirt she's going to be safe. She can also steal a base any time she wants."

Vitola has maintained a weighted 4.36 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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. 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.

Vitola joins recent Gatorade Delaware Softball Players of the Year Nicole Marcon (2017-18, Caravel Academy), Avery Wheatley (2016-17, Delmar High School), Whitney DeMora (2015-16, Polytech High School) and Regan Green (2014-15 & 2013-14, Laurel High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Vitola 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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