

ST. JOSEPH-OGDEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 **Bailey Dowling of St. Joseph-Ogden High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year**. Dowling is the first Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph-Ogden 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 Dowling as Illinois' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Dowling 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-10 junior shortstop batted .674 with 22 home runs and 47 RBI this past season, leading the Spartans (22-10) to the Class 2A sectional semifinals. A member of the USA Softball Junior National Team, Dowling drew 31 walks to post a .760 on-base percentage and compiled a 1.495 slugging percentage. Ranked as the No. 3 recruit in the Class of 2020 by Softball America, she hit three home runs in SJO's postseason opener and concluded her junior year with a state career record of 65 home runs.

Dowling has volunteered locally as a youth softball and basketball coach. "Bailey is a game-changer and, hands-down, the best player I've ever watched or coached," said Laura Harms, head coach of Bishop McNamara High School. "Unless you intentionally walk her, every time she is a threat. She waits to find her pitch and everything looks effortless."

Dowling has maintained a 3.34 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Alabama beginning in the fall of 2020.

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.

Two-time winner Dowling joins Gatorade Illinois Softball Players of the Year Chardonnay Harris (2016-17, Oak Park & River Forest High School), Caroline Hedgcock (2015-16, Downers Grove South High School), Taylor Johnson (2014-15, Beecher High School) and Dale Ryndak (2013-14, Downers Grove North High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Dowling 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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