

LAWRENCE FREE STATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Tatum Clopton of Lawrence Free State High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year**. Clopton is the first Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lawrence Free State 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 Clopton as Kansas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Clopton 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-10 sophomore right-handed pitcher led the Firebirds to a 23-2 record and a second-straight Class 6A state championship this past season. Clopton finished with a 16-1 record, a 0.52 ERA and 212 strikeouts in 107 innings pitched, issuing just 15 walks. A First Team All-State selection as a freshman, she batted .357 with 30 runs scored, 21 RBI, a .541 on-base percentage and a .679 slugging percentage during her sophomore campaign. Ranked as the nation's No. 11 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Softball America, she fired three shutouts in three postseason games.

Clopton has volunteered locally as a youth softball and volleyball coach. "Tatum is a fierce competitor," said Lee Ice, head coach of Lawrence Free State High School. "When she's in the circle there's not a hitter she doesn't feel she can't beat. She has tremendous control and confidence in all of her pitches."

Clopton has maintained a weighted 3.76 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at Oklahoma State University beginning in the fall of 2021.

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.

Clopton joins recent Gatorade Kansas Softball Players of the Year Lauren Mills (2017-18, Seaman High School), Mady Young (2016-17, Olathe Northwest High School), Ryleigh Buck (2015-16, Wellington High School), Brittany Finney (2014-15, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School) and Allison Stewart (2013-14, Olathe East High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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