

## GULL LAKE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Lauren Esman of Gull Lake High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Michigan Softball Player of the Year**. Esman is the first Gatorade Michigan Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Gull Lake 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 Esman as Michigan'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, Esman 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-9 senior left-handed pitcher, outfielder and first baseman had led the Blue Devils to a 30-5-1 record and a berth in the Division 1, District 10 Tournament quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Esman owned a 20-0 record with a 0.45 ERA and 278 strikeouts against just nine walks in 125.2 innings pitched entering the district postseason round of eight. A 2018 NFCA Third Team All-American selection, Esman batted .523 with 11 home runs, 43 runs scored, 37 RBI and a 1.058 slugging percentage through 36 games. She is ranked as the nation's No. 66 recruit in the Class of 2019 by Softball America.

Esman has volunteered locally as a youth softball and volleyball coach. "Lauren is the best pitcher we faced in the past two years and she is also one of the best hitters I've faced in my career," said Alicia Smith, head coach of Mattawan High. "Lauren is so respected at the plate that in any crucial situations, she will be intentionally walked."

Esman has maintained a weighted 3.96 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Esman joins recent Gatorade Michigan Softball Players of the Year Jenny Bressler (2017-18, Plymouth High School), Meghan Beaubien (2016-17, 2015-16 & 2014-15, St. Mary Catholic Central High School), and Taylor Weaver (2013-14, Romeo High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Esman 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).

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