

MAPLE GROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 **Ava Dueck of Maple Grove Senior High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year**. Dueck is the second Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Maple Grove Senior 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 Dueck as Minnesota'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, Dueck 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 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Crimson to a 21-2 record and a berth in the Section 5AAAA Tournament championship game at the time of her selection. Dueck posted a 16-2 record with a 1.02 ERA, striking out 194 batters in 123 innings pitched through 23 games. At the plate, she owned a .534 batting with 14 home runs, 34 RBI, 20 walks, a .654 on-base percentage and a 1.397 slugging percentage entering the title game.

Dueck has volunteered locally at a retirement home and as an elementary school teacher's aide. She has also donated her time on behalf of multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Ava's presence in the circle is one of calm and control," said Don Bross, head coach of Blaine High. "She is one of the most dominant pitchers in the state."

Dueck has maintained a weighted 3.85 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Augustana University in South Dakota 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.

Dueck joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Softball Players of the Year Emily Hansen (2017-18, Buffalo High School), Marybeth Olson (2016-17, Chanhassen High School), Carlie Brandt (2015-16, Le Sueur-Henderson High School), and Sydney Smith (2014-15 & 2013-14, Maple Grove Senior High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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