

RIO RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Briana Martinez of Rio Rancho High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade New Mexico Softball Player of the Year**. Martinez is the fourth Gatorade New Mexico Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rio Rancho 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 Martinez as New Mexico'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, Martinez 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-3 senior and shortstop led the Rams (28-3) to the Class 5A state championship this past season. Martinez batted .558 with 14 home runs, 45 RBI and 53 runs scored. She also posted a 1.299 slugging percentage and stole 21 bases. A First Team All-Metro and All-District honoree, Martinez was named the District Offensive Player of the Year and was named the Albuquerque Journal's Best in Preps Softball Player of the Year.

Martinez has volunteered locally on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program and has donated her time to youth softball. "Briana Martinez is probably the most dangerous hitter in the state, as well as the best shortstop," said Angel Castillo, head coach at Rio Rancho High. "I would venture to say that no one was intentionally walked more than she was."

Martinez has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of New Mexico 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.

Martinez joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Softball Players of the Year Kali Crandall (2017-18, Artesia High School), Andrea Howard (2016-17, La Cueva High School), Santana Parra (2015-16, Centennial High School), BreOnna Castaneda (2014-15, Rio Rancho High School) and Nicole Pendley (2013-14, Rio Rancho High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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