

## WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE UTAH 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 **Huntyr Ava of West High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Utah Softball Player of the Year**. Ava is the first Gatorade Utah Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from West 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 Ava as Utah'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, Ava 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 infielder led the Panthers to a 21-1 record and a berth in the Class 5A state tournament at the time of her selection. Ava batted .719 with 15 home runs and 58 RBI through 22 games, drawing 21 walks against just one strikeout in 80 plate appearances. She had 51 runs scored and stolen 10 bases. The 2017 Class 5A MVP and three-time First Team All-State selection hit three home runs in one postseason game this spring and owned an on-base percentage of .800 and a 1.632 slugging percentage at the time of her selection.

Ava has volunteered locally as part of community beautification projects and as a youth softball coach. "Huntyr is dominant everywhere on the field," said Tony St. Hilaire, head coach of East High. "I have resorted to walking her with the bases loaded just so she can't kill us. Her discipline and pitch selection at the plate is second to none."

Ava has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Brigham Young University 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.

Ava joins recent Gatorade Utah Softball Players of the Year Jordyn Bate (2017-18, Spanish Fork High School), Cambrie Hazel (2016-17, Spanish Fork High School), Taylei Williams (2015-16, Juab High School), Kaycie Jensen (2014-15, Springville High School) and Kirtlyn Bohling (2013-14, Salem Hills High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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