

**LAWRENCE FREE STATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 28, 2020) — In its 35th 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 2019-20 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'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, Clopton joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-10 junior and right-handed pitcher was named the best player in the state by MaxPreps.com during the 2020 preseason. Clopton was dominant at the 16-and-under Premier PGF National Championships last summer for her DeMarini Aces club team, striking out 22 batters while allowing just five hits in 12 innings pitched. She moved up to the Aces' 18U team last fall and posted a 0.91 earned run average while averaging more than two strikeouts per inning. She is ranked as the nation's No. 10 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Softball America.

A member of her school's choir, Clopton has volunteered locally as a youth softball and volleyball coach. "Tatum is, no question, the best pitcher not only in the state of Kansas, but Top 10 in the nation," said Ryan Taylor, Clopton's summer ball coach with the DeMarini Aces. "Tatum is one of the most competitive kids I've ever been around. She's a special player and person."

Clopton has maintained a weighted 3.71 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 and 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 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), and Brittany Finney (2014-15, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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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