

**STILLWATER AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 28, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Allison Benning of Stillwater Area High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year. Benning is the second Gatorade Minnesota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Stillwater Area 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 Benning 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, Benning 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 6-foot-1 junior, right-handed pitcher and third baseman beat some of the top club travel teams in the country throughout the fall and winter while playing for Top Gun National. Benning featured a fastball that reached 69 mph while posting a 9-1 record with a 1.47 earned run average and 104 strikeouts in 65.1 innings pitched. Benning led Stillwater to a runner-up finish in the Class 4A state tournament as a sophomore, a year after earning the win as the Ponies claimed the 2018 state title. She is ranked as the nation's No. 41 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Extra Inning Softball.

A member of her school newspaper staff, Benning has volunteered locally at a food bank and homeless shelter, and she has donated her time as a youth softball coach. "What is so amazing to me is that Allison's speed isn't what would get our hitters out," said Sean Hall, head coach of Forest Lake High. "It was her nasty change-up that complemented her fastball. I have coached for 33 years and I have never seen a pitcher with a better change-up."

Benning has maintained a weighted 3.89 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Benning joins Gatorade Minnesota Softball Players of the Year Ava Dueck (2018-19, Maple Grove Senior High School), 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, Maple Grove Senior 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](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).