

**HOUSTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Paige Kilgore of Houston High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year. Kilgore is the first Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Houston 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 Kilgore as Mississippi'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, Kilgore 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 5-foot-10 junior, right-handed pitcher and first baseman was named the best player in the state by MaxPreps.com during the 2020 preseason and lived up to that billing during the Hilltoppers' 11-0-1 start in 2020. Kilgore posted a 7-0 record in the circle with a 0.43 earned run average and 94 strikeouts in 49 innings pitched. At the plate, she batted .457 with a .886 slugging percentage before the season was cancelled. A starting pitcher for the Hilltoppers since seventh grade, Kilgore was a 2019 Clarion Ledger All-State selection. She won the 16-and-under National Fastpitch Association National Championship last July as a member of the ASA Southern Force.

Kilgore has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Paige is an extremely hard worker and has impeccable command of her pitches," said Dale Palmer, Kilgore's summer ball coach with the Southern Force. "She is also a very strong and durable player. She seems to get better every inning, and her power gives her tremendous pop at the plate."

Kilgore has maintained a 4.12 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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 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.

Kilgore joins Gatorade Mississippi Softball Players of the Year Aspen Wesley (2018-19, 2017-18, 2016-17 & 2015-16, Neshoba Central High School), and Hailey Lunderman (2014-15, Neshoba Central 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).

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