

**BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 18, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Emily Perry of Bentonville High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year**. Perry is the second Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville 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 Perry as Arkansas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Perry joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Cat 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-5 senior infielder led the Tigers to a 29-3 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Perry posted a .490 batting average with 10 home runs, 49 RBIs, 14 stolen bases and a .950 slugging percentage. The Class 6A state tournament MVP, she struck out only twice all year and led off a game with a home run five times.

A member of the National Honor Society and her school's concert choir, Perry has volunteered locally on behalf of her church youth group and a food pantry. "When we played against Emily Perry, we tried pitching her different ways and different locations, all to no avail," said David Little, head coach at Fort Smith Northside High. "She is a dominant player at the plate. We never got her out. She is a very good second baseman as well."

Perry has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Central Arkansas 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. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Perry joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Softball Players of the Year Hallie Wacaser (2019-20 & 2017-18, Bentonville West High School), Joley Mitchell (2018-19, Rose Bud High School), and Maddy Prough (2016-17, Bentonville High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Perry has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Perry is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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