

**VILLA PARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CALIFORNIA 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 **Sydney Somerndike of Villa Park High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year**. Somerndike is the first Gatorade California Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Villa Park 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 Somerndike as California'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, Somerndike 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-7 junior right-handed pitcher had led the Spartans to a 24-2 record and a berth in the Southern Section Division 2 Tournament championship game at the time of her selection. Somerndike owned a 24-2 mark in the circle with 323 strikeouts in 157 innings pitched through 26 games. Somerndike allowed just 57 hits and 30 walks through 26 games while leading Villa Park to its first CIF softball title game since 1979. At the plate, she had compiled a .337 batting average with five home runs, 18 runs batted in and a .600 slugging percentage.

Editor of the school yearbook from 2018-20, Somerndike has volunteered on behalf of the Special Olympics as well as Giving Children Hope, which secures food and school supplies for underserved children. She also works part-time at a physical therapy clinic. "Sydney was absolutely dominant in both of her performances against us," said Kurt Davies, head coach of Diamond Bar High. "We played our best game of the year against them in the playoffs and struck out 19 times! The game was scoreless until the fifth inning, and we were just praying that she'd make a mistake. Obviously, she never flinched."

Somerndike has maintained a weighted 4.43 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Arizona beginning in the fall of 2022.

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.

Somerndike joins recent Gatorade California Softball Players of the Year Tiare Jennings (2019-20, St. Anthony High School), Nicole May (2018-19, Foothill High School), Megan Faraimo (2017-18, Cathedral Catholic High School), and Taylor Dockins (2016-17, Norco High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Somerndike has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Somerndike 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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