

**ROCK CANYON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 18, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Katie Dack-Howell of Rock Canyon High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year**. Dack-Howell is the first Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rock Canyon 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 Dack-Howell as Colorado'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, Dack-Howell 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-8 senior catcher led the Jaguars (16-2) to the Class 5A quarterfinals this past season. Dack-Howell batted .583 with 14 home runs, 26 RBI and an OPS of 2.218. A three-time First Team All-State honoree, she was also the two-time Continental League Player of the Year.

Dack-Howell wrote letters to support COVID-19 caregivers and front line workers during the pandemic and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth softball programs and cancer awareness initiatives. "Katie is as close to impossible to get out as any hitter I've ever faced," said Alan DiGiosio, head coach at Chaparral High. "Behind the dish, she's the best our state has seen in a while."

Dack-Howell has maintained a 3.63 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Texas A&M University 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.

Dack-Howell joins recent Gatorade Colorado Softball Players of the Year Laurin Krings (2019-20 & 2018-19, Loveland High School), Ali Kilponen (2017-18, Valor Christian High School), and Linnie Malkin (2016-17, Broomfield High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Dack-Howell has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Dack-Howell 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).