

**HALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CONNECTICUT 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 **Sophie Garner-MacKinnon of Hall High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year**. Garner-MacKinnon is the first Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hall 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 Garner-MacKinnon as Connecticut'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, Garner-MacKinnon 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-9 junior right-handed pitcher led the Warriors (18-5) to the Class LL semifinals this past season. Garner-McKinnon posted a 16-5 record with a 0.24 ERA, surrendering just 34 hits and 23 walks in 145.1 innings pitched, while striking out 341. An All-State honoree and two-time All-Conference selection, she also batted .481 with 15 RBI. Garner-MacKinnon was ranked as the nation's No. 10 recruit in the Class of 2022 by Extra Inning Softball and was selected to play in the Premier Girls Fastpitch Futures All-American Game in July.

A devoted member of her church community, Garner-MacKinnon has volunteered locally on behalf of youth softball programs and a soup kitchen. "Sophie is definitely the best pitcher we saw all year," said Jed Flaherty, head coach at Simsbury High. "She can really throw the heat, but she also has pinpoint control on each side of the plate."

Garner-MacKinnon has maintained a 4.07 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 & 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.

Garner-MacKinnon joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Softball Players of the Year Abby Ota (2019-20, Joel Barlow High School), Maria Hanchuk (2018-19, South Windsor High School), Becca Johnson (2017-18, Seymour High School), and Abby Abramson (2016-17, Cheshire High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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