

**LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 **Giana LaCedra of Lowell High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year**. LaCedra is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lowell 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 LaCedra as Massachusetts' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, LaCedra 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 state's two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-6 junior right-handed pitcher had led the Raiders to a 13-1 record and first place in the Merrimack Valley Conference at the time of her selection. LaCedra compiled a 13-1 mark with a 0.27 earned run average in the circle, allowing just nine walks with 230 strikeouts in 102 innings pitched. At the plate, the 2019 Merrimack Valley Conference Player of the Year posted a .404 batting average with 12 runs batted in and a .955 OPS. She had struck out just twice in 55 plate appearances through 14 games.

LaCedra has volunteered locally as part of multiple food drives to benefit a women's shelter, and she has donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Giana LaCedra definitely is the heart and soul of her team," said Brittney Souza, head coach at Tewksbury Memorial High. "Without her, I don't know if the team would be especially competitive. She was very impressive in the circle. For a younger pitcher, she presents herself like a senior."

LaCedra has maintained a 4.15 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at Eastern Carolina University 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.

Three-time winner LaCedra joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Players of the Year and Kelly Nelson (2017-18 & 2016-17, Norton High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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