

**HOUSTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 **Paige Kilgore of Houston High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year**. Kilgore is the first Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Houston 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 Kilgore as Mississippi'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, Kilgore 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 returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-10 senior right-handed pitcher and first baseman compiled a 22-2 record in the circle with a 1.20 earned run average this past season, leading the Hilltoppers (23-4) to the Class 3A state quarterfinals. Kilgore allowed just 77 hits and amassed 247 strikeouts in 145.1 innings pitched. At the plate, Kilgore posted a .453 batting average with 14 doubles, 29 runs batted in and a .697 slugging percentage. A starting pitcher for the Hilltoppers since seventh grade, she concluded her prep softball career with 112 wins in the circle.

Kilgore has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Paige is good enough to completely dominate a game on both the mound and at the plate," said Chris George, head coach of Hatley High. "She gives Houston a chance to beat anyone the moment she steps on the field."

Kilgore has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Southern Mississippi 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.

Two-time winner Kilgore joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Softball Players of the Year and Aspen Wesley (2018-19, 2017-18, & 2016-17, Neshoba Central High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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