

**COLTS NECK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 **Ava Metzger of Colts Neck High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade New Jersey Softball Player of the Year**. Metzger is the first Gatorade New Jersey Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Colts Neck 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 Metzger as New Jersey'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, Metzger 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-5 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Cougars to a 25-1 record and the Group 3 Central Jersey championship at the time of her selection. Metzger compiled a 19-1 record with a 0.50 ERA through 26 games, striking out 276 batters in 139 innings while surrendering just 49 hits. An All-State and All-Conference selection as a sophomore, she batted .488 with three home runs and 35 RBI through 26 games.

A devoted member of her church community, Metzger has volunteered locally on behalf of youth softball programs. "Ava Metzger is on fire this year," said Sherri Cate, head coach at Wall High. "She makes everything look effortless and she's got the complete package. She's dominating on both ends for them."

Metzger has maintained a 4.44 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Manhattan College 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.

Metzger joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Softball Players of the Year Karina Gaskins (2019-20 & 2018-19, Donovan Catholic High School), Victoria Sebastian (2017-18, Ramsey High School), and Julie Rodriguez (2016-17, Northern Valley Regional High School at Old Tappan), among the state's list of former award winners.

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