

**CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 **Maddy Zander of Century High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year**. Zander is the first Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Century 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 Zander as North Dakota'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, Zander 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-7 senior right-handed pitcher and center fielder compiled a 19-4 record with a 1.25 earned run average this past season, leading the Patriots (28-7) to a third-place finish at the Class A state tournament. Zander struck out 204 batters while allowing 72 hits in 134 innings pitched. The Western Dakota Association Senior Athlete of the Year, Zander is a four-time First Team All-State selection. She also posted a .504 batting average with 47 runs scored, 47 runs batted in, 12 home runs and a .941 slugging percentage in 2021.

A member of her school's student council, Zander has volunteered locally as a youth pitching coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Maddy has matured into a great leader for our team," said Kevin Ziegler, head coach of Century High. "She always shines in the big moments. She is all softball."

Zander has maintained a weighted 4.05 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Jamestown 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.

Zander joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Softball Players of the Year Logan Gronberg (2019-20 & 2018-19, Bismarck High School), Jordanne McNeilly (2017-18, Dickinson High School), and Stephi Dullum (2016-17, West Fargo High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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