

**BYRNES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 **Haylee Whitesides of Byrnes High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade South Carolina Softball Player of the Year**. Whitesides is the second Gatorade South Carolina Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Byrnes 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 Whitesides as South Carolina'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, Whitesides 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 and infielder led the Rebels to a 32-1 record and the Class AAAAA state championship this past season. Whitesides compiled a 20-1 mark with a 0.64 earned run average in the circle, allowing just 28 walks with 149 strikeouts in 101 innings pitched. At the plate, 2019 First Team All-State selection posted a .429 batting average with four home runs, 28 runs batted in and a 1.220 OPS.

A member of the National Honor Society, Whitesides has volunteered locally as part of a Christmas toy collection drive in her community, and she has donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Haylee Whitesides is one of the top pitchers we've faced since I started coaching," said Larissa Shannon, head coach at Ashley Ridge High. "Her demeanor never changes from inning to inning. She's always going to challenge hitters because she's so confident in her abilities."

Whitesides has maintained a 3.53 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Clemson 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.

Whitesides joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Softball Players of the Year Kylee Gleason (2019-20, May River High School), Bailey Betenbaugh (2018-19 & 2016-17, Union County High School), and Karly Heath (2017-18, North Augusta High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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