

**BARBERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS 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 **Sophia Simpson of Barbers Hill High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Texas Softball Player of the Year**. Simpson is the second Gatorade Texas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Barbers Hill 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 Simpson as Texas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Simpson 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-10 senior right-handed pitcher led the Eagles to a 42-2 record and the Class 5A state championship this past season. Simpson compiled a 21-0 mark in the circle with a 0.18 earned run average, allowing just 36 hits and 24 walks to go with 271 strikeouts in 119.1 innings pitched. Simpson tossed four no-hitters with one perfect game and was the winning pitcher in seven of the Eagles' 11 postseason victories. At the plate, the District 21-5A co-Most Valuable Player batted .246 with two home runs and 14 runs batted in.

Simpson has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank, and she has donated toys to underprivileged youth during the Christmas season. "Sophia is an amazing talent in the circle," said Aaron Fuller, head coach of Barbers Hill High. "She has no hesitation to throw any pitch to any hitter no matter what the situation of the game is. She is such a fierce competitor in the circle and her teammates feed off her high energy."

Simpson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Texas 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.

Simpson joins recent Gatorade Texas Softball Players of the Year Jayda Coleman (2019-20, The Colony High School), Rylee Trlicek (2018-19, Hallettsville High School), Makinzy Herzog (2017-18, Ridge Point High School), and Casey Dixon (2016-17, Willis High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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