

**LYNDON INSTITUTE STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VERMONT 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 **Kelleigh Simpson of Lyndon Institute** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Vermont Softball Player of the Year**. Simpson is the first Gatorade Vermont Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lyndon Institute.

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 Vermont'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, 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-5 senior right-handed pitcher led the Vikings (15-1) to the Division 2 state championship this past season. Simpson posted a 10-1 record with a 1.16 ERA, striking out 146 batters and walking just 12 in 72.1 innings pitched. The Northern Vermont Athletic Conference Capital Division Player of the Year, she also batted .444 with two home runs and 25 RBI.

Also a field hockey standout, Simpson is a member of her school's Student Council and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs. "Kelleigh Simpson was head and shoulders above any other pitcher we faced all year," said Bob Cameron, head coach at Middlebury High. "She's very impressive on the mound, but she appears to be very humble and low-key. Every coach in Vermont would love to have a talented individual like her on their team."

Simpson has maintained a 3.75 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball at St. Michael's 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.

Simpson joins recent Gatorade Vermont Softball Players of the Year Meghan Connor (2019-20, Bellows Free Academy), Sarah Harvey (2018-19, Missisquoi Valley Union High School), Riley Magoon (2017-18, Colchester High School), and Payton Buxton (2016-17, Middlebury Union 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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