

**GLEN ALLEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Emerson Aiken of Glen Allen High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade Virginia Softball Player of the Year**. Aiken is the first Gatorade Virginia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Glen Allen 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 Aiken as Virginia'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, Aiken 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-9 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Jaguars to a 12-0 record and a berth in the Region 5B Tournament quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Aiken owned a 12-0 mark in the circle with a 0.00 earned run average through 12 games. She had allowed just eight hits and three walks while amassing 119 strikeouts in 48 innings pitched. At the plate, the 2019 First Team All-State selection, posted a .500 batting average with two home runs, 13 runs batted in and a .938 slugging percentage. She entered the postseason with a 44-6 record and 571 strikeouts in her prep softball career.

Aiken has volunteered locally with the ASK Childhood Cancer Foundation and the Goochland Animal Shelter, and she has also donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Emerson has been phenomenal this year," said Becky Milton, head coach of Douglas Freeman High. "She pitched another perfect game against us this year. Her poise and leadership are like no other."

Aiken has maintained a weighted 4.46 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Two-time winner Aiken joins recent Gatorade Virginia Softball Players of the Year Bailey Miskin (2018-19, West Springfield High School), Alex Echazarreta (2017-18, Madison High School), and Kathryn Sandercock (2016-17, Bishop O'Connell High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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