

**ST. ALBANS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST 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 **Tayven Stephenson of St. Albans High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Softball Player of the Year**. Stephenson is the third Gatorade West Virginia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Albans 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 Stephenson as West 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, Stephenson 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 sophomore right-handed pitcher and infielder had led the Red Dragons to a 28-0 record and a berth in the Class AAA regional tournament at the time of her selection. Stephenson compiled an 18-0 mark with a 0.39 earned run average in the circle, fanning 213 and walking just 15 in 107 innings pitched. At the plate, the 2021 First Team All-Conference selection posted a .396 batting average with 10 home runs, 39 runs batted in, 26 runs scored and a 1.267 OPS.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Stephenson is an active participant in her school's STEM Club (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and has volunteered locally as part of a charity Christmas gift-wrapping initiative. She has also donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Tayven Stephenson is a once-in-a-lifetime athlete and an all-around great person," said St. Albans High head coach Christian Watts. "On the field, she is a beast and a wonderful teammate and she will always be the first to pick up another teammate and encourage them through good times and bad."

Stephenson has maintained a 4.48 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at the University of Kentucky beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Stephenson joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Softball Players of the Year Delani Buckner (2019-20 & 2017-18, Herbert Hoover High School), Caiti Mathes (2018-19, Hurricane High School), and Katie Adams (2016-17, Hurricane High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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