

**FOSSIL RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE COLORADO SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Nikki McGaffin** of **Fossil Ridge High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year**. McGaffin is the second Gatorade Colorado Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Fossil Ridge 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 McGaffin as Colorado'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, McGaffin 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-7 senior right-handed pitcher led the Sabercats (24-4) to the Class 5A semifinals this past season. McGaffin posted a 23-3 record with a 1.07 ERA, striking out 280 batters in 170 innings pitched while walking just 32. A two-time Class 5A Player of the Year, she also batted .466 with four home runs and 30 RBI. She is a National Fastpitch Coaches Association First Team All-Region selection and a three-time First Team All-State honoree.

McGaffin has volunteered on behalf of youth softball programs and the SHE Rescue Home, a safe haven for girls aged 5 - 16 years of age. "McGaffin was dominant in the circle and led the state in strikeouts," said Gary Mares, head coach at Horizon High. "She was a dangerous hitter, too. She really dominated our league, and the rest of the field, for the past few years."

McGaffin has maintained a 3.55 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

McGaffin joins recent Gatorade Colorado Softball Players of the Year Katie Dack-Howell (2020-21, Rock Canyon High School), Laurin Krings (2019-20 & 2018-19, Loveland High School), and Ali Kilponen (2017-18, Valor Christian High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, McGaffin has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. McGaffin is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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