

**LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 **Giana LaCedra** of **Lowell High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year**. LaCedra is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lowell 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 LaCedra as Massachusetts' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, LaCedra 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.).

At the time of her selection, the state's three-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year had led the Red Raiders to an 18-4 record and a berth in the Division 1 state tournament quarterfinals. LaCedra, a 5-foot-6 senior right-handed pitcher, compiled an 18-4 mark in the circle through 22 games with a 0.38 earned run average and 317 strikeouts against just 23 walks in 149 innings pitched. At the plate, the two-time Boston Globe and Boston Herald All-Scholastic was batting .394 with six triples, five doubles and a .697 slugging percentage entering the postseason round of eight.

LaCedra has been working with Special Education students as an intern with the Lowell High physical education department this spring. She has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach. "Giana continues to be the hardest-working player I have ever coached," said Bo Durso, head coach of Lowell High School. "Her level of maturity for a girl her age is unmatched. It's like having another assistant coach at my disposal. She is a joy to watch pitch and a pleasure to coach."

LaCedra has maintained a weighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell 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.

Four-time winner LaCedra joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Players of the Year Kelly Nelson (2017-18, Norton 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, LaCedra 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. LaCedra 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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