

**BILLINGS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 9, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Kennedy Venner** of **Billings Senior High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Montana Softball Player of the Year**. Venner is the second Gatorade Montana Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Billings Senior 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 Venner as Montana'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, Venner 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-8 senior right-handed pitcher and shortstop led the Broncs to a 23-3 record and the Class AA state championship this past season. Venner compiled a 16-1 record in the circle with a 1.09 earned run average, striking out 262 batters while allowing just 66 hits in 112.1 innings pitched. The Class AA Eastern Division Player of the Year, Venner fired two no-hitters, including one perfect game. At the plate, she batted .250 and hit two home runs.

A member of the Billings High School student council, Venner has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives through her school's Key Club. "Kennedy lifted [Billings] to a state championship," said Mike Falcon, head coach of Skyview High School. "She was on a whole different level than anyone else in the state. She was the (state's) most dominant pitcher in years."

Venner has maintained a weighted 4.14 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Carroll 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Venner joins recent Gatorade Montana Softball Players of the Year Kynzie Mohl (2020-21, Glacier High School), Anna Toon (2019-20 & 2018-19, Great Falls High School), and Erin Hocker (2017-18, Great Falls 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, Venner 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. Venner 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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