

**DONOVAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 **Julia Apostolakos** of **Donovan Catholic High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New Jersey Softball Player of the Year**. Apostolakos is the second Gatorade New Jersey Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Donovan Catholic 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 Apostolakos as New Jersey'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, Apostolakos 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 5-foot-9 junior right-handed pitcher had led the Griffins (30-0) to the Non-Public A state title and a berth in the Tournament of Champions. Apostolakos compiled a 26-0 record with a 0.34 ERA through 30 games, striking out 308 batters in 144.2 innings pitched while walking just 29. She also batted .656 with 11 home runs and 59 RBI. A National Fastpitch Coaches Association First Team All-American, she is a two-time First Team All-State selection.

Founder of her school's Mental Health for Athletes organization, Apostolakos has volunteered locally on behalf of Habitat for Humanity, a children's hospital and youth softball programs. "Julia Apostolakos is the best overall player we faced all season," said Gary Bury, head coach at Immaculata High School. "She's equal to or better than anyone we've seen as a pitcher, but what makes her the best is that she's such a threat in the batter's box. She is a great hitter."

Apostolakos has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Apostolakos joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Softball Players of the Year Ava Metzger (2020-21, Colts Neck High School), Karina Gaskins (2019-20 & 2018-19, Donovan Catholic High School), and Victoria Sebastian (2017-18, Ramsey 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, Apostolakos 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. Apostolakos 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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