

**LAKOTA WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 **KK Mathis** of **Lakota West High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Ohio Softball Player of the Year**. Mathis is the first Gatorade Ohio Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lakota West 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 Mathis as Ohio'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, Mathis 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-9 senior right-handed pitcher and first baseman led the Firebirds to a 28-4 record and the Division 1 state title this past season. Mathis batted .600 with 10 home runs, 55 runs batted and 32 runs scored. She also mashed 16 doubles while posting a .673 on-base percentage and a 1.325 slugging percentage. Ranked as the nation's No. 19 recruit in the Class of 2022 by Extra Inning Softball, Mathis compiled a 22-3 record in the circle with a 2.05 earned run average and 189 strikeouts in 147 innings pitched. In Lakota West's 9-2 win over Springfield High in the state title game, the 2021 Ohio High School Division 1 Player of the Year was 3-for-3 at the plate with a home run and double while tossing a five-hitter with six strikeouts.

A member of the Lakota West high Student Athlete Advisory Board, Mathis has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach and mentor. "KK is one of the most dominant, forceful leaders I've ever coached against," said Jackie Cornelius-Bedel, head coach of Oak Hills High School. "She is very athletic and a solid all-around softball player. The thing that sets KK apart from all other good softball players is her ability to lead. She demands the best from her teammates but also holds herself to an even higher standard."

Mathis has maintained a weighted 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at James Madison University 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.

Mathis joins recent Gatorade Ohio Softball Players of the Year Madi Ogden (2020-21, Williamsburg High School), Allison Smith (2019-20, Champion High School), Hope Straight (2018-19, Mount Vernon High School), and Megan Turner (2017-18, Champion 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, Mathis 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. Mathis 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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