

**BISHOP O'CONNELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Katie Kutz** of **Bishop O'Connell High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Virginia Softball Player of the Year**. Kutz is the fourth Gatorade Virginia Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bishop O'Connell 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 Kutz as Virginia'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, Kutz 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 junior right-handed pitcher led the Knights to a 21-1 record and both the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference as well as the Virginia Independent School Athletic Association Division I tournament titles this past season. Kutz compiled a 17-0 mark in the circle with a 0.39 earned run average and fanned 235 batters while allowing just 38 hits and 11 walks in 107 innings pitched. Ranked as the nation's No. 6 recruit in the Class of 2023 by Extra Inning Softball, she batted .487 with seven home runs, 44 runs batted in and a .907 slugging percentage.

Also a competitive bodybuilder, Kutz has a fitness, nutrition and faith-focused Instagram account where she regularly posts training videos and nutrition tips. She has volunteered locally distributing food to people in need, and she has donated her time as a youth softball coach as well. "Katie made O'Connell a dominant team in our conference when she was in the circle," said Diane Romo-Thomas, head coach of St. John's College High School. "She also contributed with her bat. She is a game-changer."

Kutz has maintained a weighted 4.35 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at Oklahoma State University beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Kutz joins recent Gatorade Virginia Softball Players of the Year Emerson Aiken (2020-21 & 2019-20, Glen Allen High School), Bailey Miskin (2018-19, West Springfield High School), and Alex Echazarreta (2017-18, Madison 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, Kutz 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. Kutz 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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