

**BENTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Alyssa Houston** of **Benton High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year**. Houston is the first Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Benton 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 Houston as Arkansas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Houston joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jordyn Bahl (2020-21, Papillion-La Vista High School, Neb.), Megan Faraimo (2017-18, Cathedral Catholic High School, Calif.), Rachel Garcia (2014-15, Highland High School, Calif.) and Cat Osterman (2000-01, Cypress Springs High School, Texas).

The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-11 senior right-handed pitcher and third baseman led the Panthers to a 29-4 record and a third straight 5A state championship this past season. Houston posted a record of 18-3 in the circle, striking out 254 batters while issuing just 23 walks in 110.2 innings. She threw five straight no-hitters to put Benton High School in the state championship game and finished with a 0.51 ERA. She also batted .687 with 52 RBI and 13 home runs.

Houston has volunteered locally as part of multiple food pantry drives as well as a back-to-school backpack drive. She also has donated her time to various holiday donation drives. "Alyssa is special," said Greene County Tech High School head coach David Reynolds. "Great velocity, can spin it every direction and is able to locate every pitch she has. At the plate, she is a complete hitter for power and average. She is the best player in Arkansas and it's not even close."

Houston has maintained a 4.13 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Stanford 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.

Two-time winner Houston joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Softball Players of the Year Emily Perry (2020-21, Bentonville High School), Hallie Wacaser (2019-20, Bentonville West High School), and Joley Mitchell (2018-19, Rose Bud High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.