

**SOUTHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT 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 **Stella Blanchard** of **Southington High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year**. Blanchard is the second Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Southington 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 Blanchard as Connecticut'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, Blanchard 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).

At the time of her selection, the 6-foot senior right-handed pitcher had led the Blue Knights to a 25-0 record and a berth in the Class LL state semifinals. Blanchard posted a 14-0 record in the circle with a 0.00 earned run average through 25 games. Entering the state tournament final four, she'd struck out 166 batters in 78 innings while allowing just 17 hits, 10 walks and one unearned run. The 2023 Connecticut High School Softball Coaches Association Pitcher of the Year, she is a two-time First Team All-Central Connecticut Conference selection.

Blanchard participated in a Student Architectural Design Competition, winning the award for architectural excellence from the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Central Connecticut. A member of the Southington High School Key Club, she has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach, and she has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her high school softball team. "Stella was the most dominant pitcher we have faced in the last couple of years," said Scott Aresco, head coach of Maloney High School. "She has a good fastball and a great change-up. She's also a tremendous hitter."

Blanchard has maintained a weighted A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Marist College (N.Y.) 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.

Blanchard joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Softball Players of the Year Kat Gallant (2021-22, Masuk High School), Sophie Garner-MacKinnon (2020-21, Hall High School), Abby Ota (2019-20, Joel Barlow High School), and Maria Hanchuk (2018-19, South Windsor 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.