

**OLATHE WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Madison Walker** of **Olathe West High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year**. Walker is the first Gatorade Kansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Olathe 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 Walker as Kansas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Walker 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 Spring High School, Texas).

The 5-foot-10 senior third baseman led the Owls to a 24-1 record and the 6A state championship this past season. The Sunflower League Player of the Year, Walker batted .659 with 71 RBI, 50 runs and 39 extra-base hits, including 18 home runs, which matched the state single-season record. She concluded her prep career with 28 long balls, which also ties the state record.

A National Honor Society member, Walker has volunteered locally as a peer tutor in the Homework Center at Olathe West High School and as an instructor for youth softball players in the community. She also has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. "Madison Walker is an absolute force to be reckoned with," said Olathe South High School head coach Katie Burkhardt. "Offensively, she is so dangerous with a bat in her hand. Even the best pitchers in our area and in our state may get her to miss once in a game, but she isn't going to miss in her next at-bat."

Walker has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Missouri 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.

Walker joins recent Gatorade Kansas Softball Players of the Year Nija Canady (2021-22 & 2020-21, Topeka High School) and Tatum Clopton (2019-20 & 2018-19, Lawrence Free State 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.