

**EAST COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Karli Godwin** of **East Columbus High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade North Carolina Softball Player of the Year**. Godwin is the first Gatorade North Carolina Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Columbus 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 Godwin as North Carolina'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, Godwin 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 5-foot-9 senior shortstop posted a .731 batting average with 20 home runs this past season, leading the Gators (27-4) to the Class 1A state semifinals. Godwin scored 64 runs, walked 35 times and struck out just once in 131 plate appearances. Ranked as the nation's No. 8 recruit in the Class of 2023 by Extra Inning Softball, she swiped 31 bases and drove in 86 runs while posting a .809 on-base percentage and a 1.645 slugging percentage.

Godwin has volunteered locally with the East Columbus High School special education department and the Miracle League buddy program for children with intellectual and physical challenges. She has also donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Karli Godwin is a special athlete and softball player," said William Deese, head coach of Purnell Swett High School. "Defensively, she seems to make the difficult plays look easy. Offensively, she's in another stratosphere. The ball jumps off her bat and she has power to all parts of the field. She is one of the best offensive players I have ever seen."

Godwin has maintained a weighted 4.27 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Oklahoma State 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.

Godwin joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Softball Players of the Year Kierston Deal (2021-22, East Forsyth High School), Karlyn Pickens (2020-21, North Buncombe High School), Kenna Raye Dark (2019-20, Eastern Alamance High School), and Jordan Hatch (2018-19, West Stanly 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.