

**BISHOP O'CONNELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 **Katie Kutz** of **Bishop O'Connell High School** is the **2022-23 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 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-8 senior right-handed pitcher led the Knights to a 21-0 record and both the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference and Virginia Independent School Athletic Association Division I tournament titles this past season. Kutz compiled a 19-0 mark in the circle with a 0.45 earned run average, striking out 268 batters while allowing just 24 hits in 109 innings. Ranked as the nation's No. 13 recruit in the Class of 2023 by Extra Inning Softball, she batted .557 with 13 home runs, 46 RBI and a 1.177 slugging percentage.

A professional bodybuilder after earning her pro card by winning the Viking Classic in Minnesota last October, Kutz has volunteered locally distributing food to people in need, and she has donated her time as a youth softball coach. "Katie is arguably the best high school pitcher and all-around athlete that I have seen," said Rita Horning Rahl, head coach of Elizabeth Seton High School. "The thing that makes Katie a standout is obviously her velocity, throwing consistently in the high 60s, low 70s. Of course, the speed helps intimidate batters, but she also has the ability to pick a batter's weakness and locate her pitches on demand."

Kutz has maintained a weighted 4.44 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.

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