

**CLAY CENTER COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 3, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Cole Pladson** of **Clay Center Community High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year**. Pladson is the first Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Clay Center Community High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation's top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Pladson as Kansas' best high school baseball player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Gary Sheffield (1985-86, Hillsborough High School, Fla.), Alex Rodriguez (1992-93, Westminster Christian School, Fla.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas) and Max Clark (2022-23, 2021-22 & 2020-21, Franklin Community High School, Ind.).

The 6-foot, 185-pound junior outfielder and right-handed pitcher led the Tigers to a 25-1 record and the Class 4A West Region 3 final this past season. Pladson batted .534 with 45 RBI, 42 runs scored, nine doubles and eight home runs. He also swiped 16 bases en route to compiling an OPS of 1.832 and an ISO power percentage of .569. He posted a 7-2 on the mound with six shutouts, two no-hitters and a save, striking out 67 in 47.1 innings as opponents batted just .187 against him. He concluded the year with a 1.33 ERA, a 0.91 WHIP and a 1.19 FIP. A two-time All-State selection, he's ranked as the nation's No. 176 prospect in his class by Perfect Game and he's the No. 41 outfielder.

Pladson has volunteered locally instructing and mentoring youth athletes in the sports of basketball, baseball and football. "He's a very good hitter," said Curtis Hamilton, head coach at Sabetha High School. "I also saw him pitch and he is very talented on the mound as well. He's a very high prospect and it's very apparent why. He's a player who I have seen in person who could definitely be considered one of the best in Kansas."

Pladson has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play baseball on scholarship at Oklahoma State University in the fall of 2025.

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.

Pladson joins recent Gatorade Kansas Baseball Players of the Year Nick English (2022-23, Olathe South High School), Jackson Lovich (2021-22, Blue Valley West High School), Ben Kudrna (2020-21, Blue Valley Southwest High School) and Jace Kaminska (2019-20, Caney Valley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$4.9 million in grants to winners across more than 1,900 organizations.

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 X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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