

## **HACKETT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (June 7, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Mackenzie Freeman** of **Hackett High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year**. Freeman is the first Gatorade Arkansas Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hackett 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 Freeman as Arkansas' best high school softball 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 Amanda Freed (1997-98, Pacifica High School, Calif.), Cat Osterman (2000-01, Cypress Springs High School, Texas), Rachel Garcia (2014-15 & 2012-13, Highland High School, Calif.) and Ava Brown (2022-23 & 2021-22, Lake Creek High School, Texas).

The 6-foot-1 junior right-handed pitcher led the Hornets to a 30-3 record and the 3A state championship this past season. Freeman compiled a 29-2 record, tying a state single-season record for victories, with six no-hitters, a 0.48 ERA and 263 strikeouts in 176 innings pitched. She also batted .536 with 55 RBI and was named MVP of the 3A title game.

Freeman has volunteered locally with her church's sports camp and Vacation Bible School as well as for various school sports camps. She has also donated her time to a local animal shelter, where she walks dogs. "Mackenzie is one of the best high school players I've seen," said Jonathan Vire, head coach at Paris High School. "She's cool, calm, and collected while playing one of the most stressful positions on the field. She commands the circle and never gets rattled."

Freeman has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has verbally committed to play softball on scholarship at the University of Tulsa 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.

Freeman joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Softball Players of the Year Alyssa Houston (2022-23 & 2021-22, Benton High School), Emily Perry (2020-21, Bentonville High School) and Hallie Wacaser (2019-20, Bentonville West 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).