

**MASUK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 7, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Julia Bacoulis** of **Masuk High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year**. Bacoulis is the fourth Gatorade Connecticut Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Masuk 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 Bacoulis as Connecticut's 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).

At the time of her selection, the 5-foot-7 junior right-handed pitcher had led the Panthers to a 26-0 record and the CIAC Class L championship game, scheduled for June 8. Bacoulis owned an 18-0 record and a 0.875 ERA through 26 games, compiling 251 strikeouts in 128 innings and posting a 0.612 WHIP. Entering the state final, opposing hitters were batting .107 against her. At the plate, the returning 2023 All-State selection batted .481 entering the title game with 11 home runs, 40 RBI and 42 runs along with six doubles and four triples. Also a CIAC Sportsmanship Conference "Sportsmanship Superhero" honoree, she posted an on-base percentage of .591, an OPS of 1.658 and an ISO power rating of .610.

Bacoulis serves as the Masuk boys basketball team manager during the winter sports season. She has donated her time on behalf of a fundraiser car wash and by coaching youth athletes in strength training. She also works in her family's salon business, performing clerical and support duties. "In my 12 years at Southington, I don't think I've ever seen such improvement in a player from one year to the next—truly," said Davina Hernandez, head coach at Southport High School. "Julia has been a very good pitcher since her freshman year, but she just keeps getting better and better. She's also a very tough out at the plate and a very good hitter. She's looked stronger and better than ever this spring. She pitched a great game against us, giving up only five hits and one earned run with 17 strikeouts and one walk. I've been most impressed with her ability to control her pitches this year. She has a very bright future ahead of her. She's had a very impressive 2024."

Bacoulis has maintained a 4.06 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has verbally committed to play softball on scholarship at Florida Gulf Coast 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.

Bacoulis joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Softball Players of the Year Stella Blanchard (2022-23, Southington High School), Kat Gallant (2021-22, Masuk High School), Sophie Garner-MacKinnon (2020-21, Hall High School) and Abby Ota (2019-20, Joel Barlow 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.