

**PACE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 **Jayden Heavener** of **Pace High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Florida Softball Player of the Year**. Heavener is the first Gatorade Florida Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pace 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 Heavener as Florida’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).

The 5-foot-7 senior left-handed pitcher and first baseman led the Patriots to a 28-2 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Heavener posted a 25-2 mark with a 0.44 earned run average in the circle, striking out 322 batters while allowing just 31 hits in 142 innings pitched. She compiled a .434 batting average with 12 home runs, 35 RBI and a .898 slugging percentage. She concluded her prep softball career with 70 victories and 1,174 strikeouts.

Heavener has volunteered locally at the Santa Rosa and Escambia County Humane Societies. She has also donated her time as a youth softball coach. “In the circle, Jayden is a bulldog,” said Taryn Gray, head coach of Fort Walton Beach High School. “She sees holes in swings and attacks. She is not a player that will let you beat her mentally. She is by far the best I’ve seen at this level in the state, mentally and physically.”

Heavener has maintained a weighted 3.40 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play softball on scholarship at Louisiana 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.

Heavener joins recent Gatorade Florida Softball Players of the Year Katelynn Oxley (2022-23, Bartow High School), Jazzy Francik (2021-22, Melbourne High School), Julia Knowler (2020-21, Fort Myers High School) and Avery Goelz (2019-20, Lakewood Ranch 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.