

**AUSTINTOWN FITCH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 **Sydney Watts** of **Austintown Fitch High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Ohio Softball Player of the Year**. Watts is the first Gatorade Ohio Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Austintown Fitch 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 Watts as Ohio'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-8 junior right-handed pitcher led the Falcons to a 23-1 record and a second straight Division 1 state championship this past season. Watts posted a 23-1 mark in the circle with a 0.53 earned run average, striking out 279 batters while allowing just 27 hits in 133.1 innings pitched. She fired a perfect game in the state semifinals and followed that with a two-hit shutout in the title game, blasting a home run in each game as well. At the plate, Watts hit .479 with 13 home runs, 48 runs batted in and a 1.141 slugging percentage this spring. She is ranked as the nation's No. 12 recruit in the Class of 2025 by MaxPreps.

Watts has volunteered locally with Someplace Safe, a haven for people exposed to domestic violence. She has also donated her time at the Mahoning County Dog Pound & Adoption Center and as a youth softball coach. "There are plenty of adjectives to describe Sydney Watts, but I will simply say she's the absolute best I have ever competed against," said Fred Mootz, head coach of Boardman High School. "It's not just her pitching either. She's a feared hitter by opposing pitchers. Her softball IQ is uncanny as well."

Watts has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play softball on scholarship at Georgia Tech beginning 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.

Watts joins recent Gatorade Ohio Softball Players of the Year Brooke Mannon (2022-23, West Jefferson High School), KK Mathis (2021-22, Lakota West High School), Madi Ogden (2020-21, Williamsburg High School) and Allison Smith (2019-20, Champion 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.