

LINCOLN-WAY CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 9, 2025) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Bella Dimitrijevic of Lincoln-Way Central High School is the 2024-25 Gatorade Illinois Softball Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Dimitrijevic as Illinois' best high school softball player, and she joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Cat Osterman (2000-01, Cypress Springs High School, Texas), Rachel Garcia (2014-15 & 2012-13, Highland High School, Calif.), Ava Brown (2022-23, Lake Creek High School, Texas) and Addisen Fisher (2023-24, Bend High School, Oregon).

At the time of her selection, the 5-foot-10 senior right-handed pitcher had led the Knights to a 33-1 record and a berth in the Class 4A Lockport Township Sectional semifinals. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Dimitrijevic compiled a 22-0 record with two saves and a 0.43 earned run average in the circle through 34 games, striking out 318 batters while allowing just 47 hits and 26 walks in 147.2 innings pitched. Entering the postseason round of four, Dimitrijevic was batting .330 with seven home runs and 39 RBI. A member of the Croatian National Team, she participated in the Women's Softball European Championships in the Netherlands last September.

Dimitrijevic has volunteered locally at the Bayer/Pulmonary Hypertension Association, assisting patients with limited mobility. She has also donated her time as a youth pitching instructor. "Bella is one of the best pitchers to come out of this area in a long time," said Marissa Chovanec, head coach of Lockport Township High School. "She is both dominant in the circle and is a game-changer at the plate. The Knights wouldn't be the team they have been for the last four years without Bella."

Dimitrijevic has maintained a 4.35 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play softball at Florida 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 across 12 different high school sports – 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.

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 \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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](https://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X (Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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