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**PUNAHOU SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® HAWAII VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 14, 2011) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Tayler Higgins of Punahou School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Hawaii Volleyball Player of the Year. Higgins is the fourth Gatorade Hawaii Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Punahou School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the court, distinguishes Higgins as Hawaii's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award announced in December, Higgins joins an elite alumni association of past state volleyball award winners, including USA Volleyball players Kim Glass (2001-02, Horseshoe HS, Penn.), Kim Willoughby (1998-99, 1999-00, Assumption HS, La.) and Ogonna Nnamani (1999-00, University HS, Ill).

The 5-foot-9 junior setter led the Buff n' Blue to a 15-0 record and the Division I state title this past season. Higgins recorded 95 assists, 16 digs and 11 kills while posting a .578 kill percentage in the state tournament. The 2011 Division I State Tournament MVP, she was also named 2011 Interscholastic League of Honolulu Player of the Year.

Higgins has maintained a 3.17 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she has volunteered locally as an assistant in the Punahou School athletic office and has also donated her time collecting gifts and canned goods on behalf of an area shelter for needy families.

"Tayler Higgins is an incredible setter with an amazing volleyball IQ," said Tommy Lake, head coach of rival Moanalua High. "She always has consistent, even keeled performances yet she takes risks when needed. She had a great team at Punahou but I believe if you had switched her with the setters of any of the top teams in the state, she may have taken that team to the top too."

Higgins has verbally committed to play volleyball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Hawaii beginning in the fall of 2013.

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 ESPNHS and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Higgins joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Volleyball Players of the Year Misty Ma'a (2010-11, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Sarah Palmer (2009-10, Hawaii Baptist Academy) and Sarah Palmer (2008-09, Hawaii Baptist Academy) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners, and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

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