

**LA CUEVA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 13, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Mariana Sharp of La Cueva High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Player of the Year. Sharp is the fourth Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from La Cueva High 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 field, distinguishes Sharp as New Mexico's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Sharp joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert High School, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public High School, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View High School, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas High School, Fla.).

The 5-foot-8 senior outside hitter led the Bears to a 22-1 record and a second-straight Class 5A state championship this past season. Sharp recorded 311 kills, 202 digs, 37 service aces and 23 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .502 and a hitting percentage of .383. The Metro Prep Volleyball Player of the Year, Sharp is a two-time First Team All-State selection. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 901 kills and 515 digs.

Sharp has volunteered locally with the Lightning Boy Foundation, an organization that provides programming in traditional dance throughout Northern New Mexico. The foundation was launched in honor of Sharp's cousin, Valentino Rivera, who died at age 6 in 2016 after being hit by a drunk driver. She has also participated in multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit breast cancer research. "Mariana was an integral leader on their team not only as an attacker but defensively as well," said Christina Norton, head coach of Cibola High. "From last year to this, Mariana has grown in her IQ of the game and with her leadership skills."

Sharp has maintained a weighted 3.15 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at New Mexico 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 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.

Sharp joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Players of the Year Brie Mortensen (2018 - 19, La Cueva High School), Cat Kelly (2017-18 & 2016-17, Sandia Preparatory School), Abby Stomp (2015-16, La Cueva High School), and Amanda Carroll (2014-15 & 2013-14, Sandia High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Sharp has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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