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**RHAM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Alana Hruska of RHAM High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Player of the Year. Hruska is the third Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from RHAM 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 Hruska as Connecticut'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, Hruska joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert HS, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public HS, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View HS, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas HS, Fla.).

The 6-foot-3 senior middle blocker led the Sachems to a 35-1-1 record and their second straight Class L state championship this past season. The state's returning Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year, Hruska recorded 600 kills, 99 blocks and 34 service aces. The two-time Connecticut High School Coaches Association Player of the Year, she was also named to the national ALL-USA Second Team.

Hruska has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, a food bank, youth volleyball programs and a homeless shelter. "Hruska is tall and powerful and she has really good control on her attacks," said Rich Heitz, head coach at Southington High. "She makes it very tough on the opposition. They had a very impressive team overall, but she was the biggest factor."

Hruska has maintained a 3.87 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Two-time winner Hruska joins Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Players of the Year Gabriela Vazquez (2015-16, Platt High School), Izzy Taylor (2014-15, Darien High School), Sarah Veilleux (2013-14, RHAM High School), Marina Rose (2012-13, Coventry High School), Kyley Reed (2011-12, Rocky Hill High School), Madison McCaffery (2010-11, Fairfield Ludlowe High School), Tessa Smolinski (2009-10, RHAM High School), Erika Videtto (2008-09, Greenwich High School) and Janice Ehorn (2007-08, Amity Regional High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hruska will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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