

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)**

**WALTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Gabby Gonzales of Walton High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Volleyball Player of the Year. Gonzales is the third Gatorade Georgia Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Walton 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 Gonzales as Georgia'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, Gonzales 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-4 junior outside hitter led the Raiders to a 40-1 record, the Class 7A state championship and a No. 1 national ranking according to PrepVolleyball.com. Gonzales amassed 558 kills, 222 digs, 37 blocks and 31 service aces. The Class 7A Player of the Year, she was named an All-American by MaxPreps and FloVolleyball, and was selected for the national ALL-USA Second Team.

A devoted member of her church community, Gonzales has volunteered locally assisting the elderly and coaching youth volleyball players. "Gonzales is a six-rotation player who contributes both on offense and defense," said Greg Hodge, head coach at Lassiter High. "When her team needed a big point, I always expected her to get the next swing. She was the leader of a team that finished the season ranked No. 1 in the country."

Gonzales has maintained a 3.92 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Gonzales joins recent Gatorade Georgia Volleyball Players of the Year Gabby Curry (2016-17 & 2015-16, Buford High School), Paige McKnight (2014-15, Dunwoody High School), Haley Templeton (2013-14, Chattahoochee High School), Teegan Van Gunst (2012-13, Whitewater High School), Mary Hannah Arrington (2011-12, Pope High School), Kelly Murphy (2010-11, Walton High School), Mary Hoey (2009-10, Pope High School), Monique Mead (2008-09, Landmark Christian High School) and Betsy Smith (2007-08, Wesleyan School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Gonzales 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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