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**SOUTH PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE 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 Molly Mawhinney of South Portland High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year. Mawhinney is the first Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from South Portland 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 Mawhinney as Maine'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, Mawhinney 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 5-foot-11 senior outside hitter recorded 181 kills, 111 digs and 66 service aces, leading the Red Riots (10-7) to their first Class A state finals appearance. A First Team All-State and All-Conference honoree, Mawhinney was also named the Class A Player of the Year by the Maine Volleyball Coaches Association.

Mawhinney has volunteered locally on behalf of the Preble Street homeless shelter and resource center. "Molly Mawhinney would be a standout on any team in the state," said Melissa Brandt, head coach at Massabesic High. "Her experience and maturity just add to her skills on the court. She's developed as a great player over the last few years."

Mawhinney has maintained a B average 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.

Mawhinney joins recent Gatorade Maine Volleyball Players of the Year Kayley Cimino (2016-17, Greely High School), Jocelyn Moody (2015-16, Biddeford High School), Sarah Shelton (2014-15, Ellsworth High School), Katrina Meserve (2013-14, Falmouth High School), Mariah Hebert (2012-13, Biddeford High School), Brittany Bona (2011-12, Scarborough High School), Keila Grigware (2010-11, Biddeford High School), Michaela Campbell (2009-10 & 2008-09, Greely High School), and Mariah Grover (2007-08, Mount Desert Island High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Mawhinney 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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