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**ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Blossom of St. Joseph's Academy as its 2017-18 Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Player of the Year. Blossom is the second Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Joseph's Academy.

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 Blossom as Missouri'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, Blossom 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-10 senior setter led the Angels to a 33-3 record and the Class 4 state championship this past season. Blossom recorded 794 assists, 184 digs, 69 kills and 36 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .421 and a hitting percentage of .366. An American Volleyball Coaches Association First Team All-American and a MaxPreps Second Team All-American, she was also the St. Louis Post Dispatch All-Metro Player of the Year.

A member of the Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society, Blossom has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball coach. "Gabby brings incredible leadership to her team through her smooth level of play and is able to make every second ball that she touches better," said Adeana Brewer, head coach of Ozark High. "She is calm, collected and brings a level of confidence to her team that elevates everyone's level of play around her."

Blossom has maintained a weighted 3.75 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Penn 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.

Blossom joins recent Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Players of the Year Jena Otec (2016-17, St. Pius X High School), Meghan Donovan (2015-16, Villa Duchesne High School), Madison Duello (2014-15, Liberty High School), Lily Johnson (2013-14, Lafayette High School), Stephanie Campbell (2012-13, Lafayette High School), Alyssa Jensen (2011-12, St. Joseph's Academy), Jade Hayes (2010-11 & 2009-10, Ozark High School), Alison Landwehr (2008-09, Parkway West High School) and Allie Huffman (2007-08, Lee's Summit West High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Blossom 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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