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**MALCOLM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Jaela Zimmerman of Malcolm High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Nebraska Volleyball Player of the Year. Zimmerman is the first Gatorade Nebraska Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Malcolm 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 Zimmerman as Nebraska'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, Zimmerman 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-2 senior outside hitter amassed 568 kills, 271 digs and 35 service aces this past season, leading the Clippers (28-4) to the Class C1 quarterfinals. A 2017-18 Second Team Under Armour All-American, Zimmerman was named captain of the Lincoln Journal Star Super-State Team and was selected to the Omaha World-Herald All-Nebraska First Team.

A devoted member of her church community and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Zimmerman has volunteered locally on behalf of the Belmont Community Center, youth volleyball programs and the Matt Talbot Community Kitchen and Outreach Center. "Jaela Zimmerman is a great volleyball player," said Brandi Sladky, head coach at Bishop Neumann High. "She's so much more than just a great hitter. She passes well, she plays great defense and she's a great motivator for her team too."

Zimmerman has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Creighton 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.

Zimmerman joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Volleyball Players of the Year Brooke Heyne (2016-17, Skutt Catholic High School), Raegan LeGrand (2015-16, Papillion-La Vista South High School), Megan Wickey (2014-15, Concordia High School), Olivia Boender (2013-14, Waverly High School), Amber Rolfzen (2012-13 & 2010-11, Papillion-La Vista South High School), Kadie Rolfzen (2011-12, Papillion-La Vista South High School), Lauren Sieckmann (2009-10, Marian High School), Gina Mancuso (2008-09, Papillion-La Vista South High School) and Lauren Cook (2007-08, Pius X High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Zimmerman 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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