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**HARRISBURG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Avery Thorson of Harrisburg High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Volleyball Player of the Year. Thorson is the second Gatorade South Dakota Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Harrisburg 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 Thorson as South Dakota'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, Thorson 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-9 senior setter led the Tigers to a 23-1 record and a second-straight Class AA state championship this past season. Thorson amassed 856 assists, 248 digs, 80 kills and 51 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .304. The state's Class AA Miss Volleyball winner, Thorson is a two-time First Team All-State selection. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 2,878 assists and 880 digs.

A member of Health Occupations Students of America, Thorson has volunteered locally as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her Spirit of Joy Youth Group. "Avery was the best setter in the state, but also played great defense," said Chris Swiden, head coach of T.F. Riggs High. "She was also the best attacker out of the front of any setter we faced."

Thorson has maintained a 3.89 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Augustana 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.

Thorson joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Volleyball Players of the Year Sami Slaughter (2016-17, Harrisburg High School), Jenna Reiff (2015-16, Chester High School), Taryn Kloth (2014-15, O'Gorman High School), Maggie DeJong (2013-14 & 2012-13, Roosevelt High School), Erin Radke (2011-12, Lincoln High School), Wagner Larson (2010-11, Roosevelt High School), Marcelina Glab (2009-10, Watertown High School), Heather Goehring (2008-09, Roosevelt High School) and Amber Wollschlager (2007-08, Milbank High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Thorson 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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