

WOODSTOCK ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE CONNECTICUT VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 13, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Paula Hernandez of Woodstock Academy** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Player of the Year**. Hernandez is the first Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Woodstock 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 Hernandez as Connecticut'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, Hernandez joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert High School, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public High School, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View High School, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas High School, Fla.).

The 5-foot-7 senior outside hitter recorded 500 kills, 622 digs and 66 service aces this past season, leading the Centaurs (19-6) to the Class L semifinals. Hernandez is a three-time First Team All-State and First Team All-Eastern Connecticut Conference honoree and was selected the GameTimeCT Player of the Year.

Hernandez has volunteered locally on behalf of a community clean-up initiative and youth volleyball programs. "Paula Hernandez is an outstanding player," said Steve Banks, head coach at Fitch High. "She has the complete package of volleyball skills and she's a tough competitor. She reads the court better than any high school player that I've seen."

Hernandez has maintained an A 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.

Hernandez joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Volleyball Players of the Year Kiara Robichaud (2018 – 19, Joel Barlow High School), Alana Hruska (2017-18 & 2016-17, RHAM High School), Gabriela Vazquez (2015-16, Platt High School), Izzy Taylor (2014-15, Darien High School), and Sarah Veilleux (2013-14, RHAM High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hernandez has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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