

**CEDAR FALLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE IOWA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 13, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Akacia Brown of Cedar Falls High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Iowa Volleyball Player of the Year**. Brown is the first Gatorade Iowa Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cedar Falls 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 Brown as Iowa'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, Brown 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 6-foot senior outside hitter led the Tigers to a 44-1 record and the Class 5A state championship along with a No. 6 national ranking as rated by PrepVolleyball.com. Brown recorded 517 kills, 308 digs, 65 blocks and 50 service aces. The Iowa Girls Coaches Association Player of the Year, she was also a MaxPreps First Team All-American and a 2019-20 Under Armour Third Team All-American.

A devoted member of her church youth group, Brown has volunteered locally on behalf of food-donation drives for the needy, violence prevention initiatives and youth volleyball camps. "Akacia Brown is a great player," said Mary Beth Wiskus, head coach at Dowling Catholic High School. "She's super strong, she hits smart and she has a great attitude. She can play all six rotations and she's a powerful hitter in the front row and the back row."

Brown has maintained a 3.84 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Mississippi 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.

Brown joins recent Gatorade Iowa Volleyball Players of the Year Madi Kubik (2018 – 19 & 2017-18, Valley High School), Mackenzie May (2016-17, Wahlert Catholic High School), Carlee Ketchum (2015-16, West Delaware High School), and Mikaela Foecke (2014-15 & 2013-14, Holy Trinity Catholic High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Brown 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###