

MERCY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Jess Mruzik of Mercy High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year**. Mruzik is the second Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mercy 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 Mruzik as Michigan'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, Mruzik 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-1 senior outside hitter led the Marlins to a 59-1 record and the Division 1 state championship this past season. Mruzik compiled 495 kills, 209 digs, 47 service aces and 19 blocks while posting a dizzying .635 kill percentage and a .540 hitting percentage. The captain of the USA Volleyball Youth National Team, Mruzik missed 16 matches in September while leading Team USA to the gold medal at the FIVB Girls U18 World Championships in Egypt, earning tournament MVP honors in the process. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 2,151 kills.

A member of the Science Club and Spirit Club at Mercy High, Mruzik participated in a community cleanup effort sponsored by Mercy High, and has also donated her time instructing youth players in association with her volleyball club team as well as assisting with her local grade school volleyball program. She has also served as part of a local quilting initiative to benefit children of families in need. "Jess is a beast," said Katie Drews, head coach of Farmington High School. "Physically she's strong and quick and powerful, mentally she's smart, has excellent view of both sides of the court and has an incredibly high volleyball IQ."

Mruzik has maintained a 3.47 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Michigan this fall, though she matriculated at Ann Arbor on Jan. 9.

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.

Two-time winner Mruzik joins recent Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Players of the Year Erin O'Leary (2017-18 & 2016-17, Novi High School), Gia Milana (2015-16, Romeo High School), Katherine Carlson (2014-15, Notre Dame Preparatory School), and Carli Snyder (2013-14, Dakota High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Mruzik 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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