

**LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 9, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Shaye Witherspoon of Lafayette High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their excellence in sport, academics and community. The award recognizes Witherspoon as Missouri's best high school volleyball player, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Kerri Walsh Jennings (1995-96, Archbishop Mitty High School, CA), April Ross (1999-00, Newport Harbor High School, CA) and Campbell Flynn (2024-25, Mercy High School, MI).

The 6-foot-3 junior outside hitter led the Lancers to a 40-1 season and a third straight Class 5 state championship this past season. Witherspoon amassed 636 kills and 274 digs, including a 32-kill, 12-dig effort in Lafayette's 3-1 win over Lee's Summit North High School in the state final. She also recorded 94 service aces, 94 blocks and 32 assists while posting a .502 kill percentage and a .395 hitting percentage. An AVCA First Team All-American selection, she has participated in the USA Volleyball National Team Development Program training series for the past three years.

Witherspoon has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball coach. "Shaye is the type of athlete who completely changes the dynamic of a match," said Aubri Janes, head coach of Lee's Summit North High School. "Her skill set is exceptional—she can take over a point at any time. But what truly sets her apart is her leadership and composure. She plays with an intensity and confidence that elevates everyone around her."

Witherspoon has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play volleyball at the University of Nebraska beginning in the fall of 2027.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one state winner from each of the 50 states and Washington D.C., in 12 different sports: football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls track & field. In total, 610 high school athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the winners in each sport.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$6.4 million in grants to winners across more than 2,200 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X (Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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