

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)**

**LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® ILLINOIS VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 14, 2011) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Alexis Viliunas of Lyons Township High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year. Viliunas is the first Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lyons Township 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 court, distinguishes Viliunas as Illinois' best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award announced in December, Viliunas joins an elite alumni association of past state volleyball award winners, including USA Volleyball players Kim Glass (2001-02, Horseshoe HS, Penn.), Kim Willoughby (1998-99, 1999-00, Assumption HS, La.) and Ogonna Nnamani (1999-00, University HS, Ill).

The 6-foot-1 senior setter/outside hitter led the Lions (30-9) to the Class 4A quarterfinals this past season. She recorded 644 assists, 320 kills, 300 digs, 54 service aces and 43 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .499. The 2011 Chicago Tribune Volleyball Player of the Year and a 2011-12 American Volleyball Coaches Association Under Armour Second Team All-American, Viliunas set a school record for career assists with 2,202.

Viliunas has maintained a 4.44 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the J. Kyle Braid Leadership Foundation and Project Linus, a non-profit organization that provides blankets for needy children.

"Alexis Viliunas leads not only with her skill but also with her poise and confidence," said Lyons Township High Head Coach Joann Pyritz. "She is knowledgeable about the game and highly skilled, but more importantly she brings out the best in her teammates."

Viliunas has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Illinois beginning in the fall of 2012.

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 ESPNHS and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Viliunas joins recent Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Players of the Year Kelly Lamberti (2010-11, Cary-Grove High School), Annemarie Hickey (2009-10, Joilet Catholic Academy) and Hannah Werth (2008-09, Glenwood) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. 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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

###