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**EDEN PRAIRIE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 14, 2011) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Sarah Wilhite of Eden Prairie High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Minnesota Volleyball Player of the Year. Wilhite is the second Gatorade Minnesota Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Eden Prairie 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 Wilhite as Minnesota's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award announced in December, Wilhite 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 junior outside hitter led the Eagles to a 27-6 record and the Class AAA state title this past season. Wilhite recorded 636 kills, 278 digs, 60 blocks and 33 service aces while posting a kill percentage of .440. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, she collected a match-high 33 kills in the state title-clinching win against Lakeville North.

Wilhite has maintained a 3.90 GPA in the classroom. An accomplished vocalist with her school's treble choir and women's concert chorale, she has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball coach.

"Sarah Wilhite was the hardest to defend of all the players we played this season," said Dennis Piechowski, head coach of rival Hutchinson High. "We changed block schemes against her and she still found a way to score. She is at the top of my list of the players we saw this year."

Wilhite has verbally committed to play volleyball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Wisconsin beginning in the fall of 2013.

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.

Wilhite joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Volleyball Players of the Year Kellie McNeil (2010-11, Lakeville North High School), Ashley Wittman (2009-10, Shakopee) and Ashley Wittman (2008-09, Shakopee) 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.

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