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**LEWIS-PALMER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 17, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Michaela Putnicki of Lewis-Palmer High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Colorado Volleyball Player of the Year. Putnicki is the second Gatorade Colorado Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lewis-Palmer 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 Putnicki as Colorado'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, Putnicki joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlerlert HS, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public HS, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View HS, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas HS, Fla.).

The 6-foot-1 senior outside hitter led the Rangers to a 29-0 record and the Class 4A state championship this past season. Putnicki recorded 309 kills, 222 digs and 27 service aces. A 2016-17 Under Armour Third Team All-American, she is also a First Team All-State and First Team All-Pikes Peak Athletic Conference honoree.

Putnicki has volunteered locally on behalf of a senior living facility and youth volleyball programs, and has served as a LINK leader in her school. "Putnicki is a dominant player who most teams have to game-plan around," said Daisha Agho, head coach at Berthoud High. "She's very versatile too and she's been a top player for that team for three years."

Putnicki has maintained a 4.05 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Virginia 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.

Putnicki joins recent Gatorade Colorado Volleyball Players of the Year Shannon Webb (2015-16, Cherokee Trail High School), Alexa Smith (2014-15, Lewis-Palmer High School), Haleigh Washington (2013-14 & 2012-13, Doherty High School), Nicole Dalton (2011-12 & 2010-11, Chaparral High School), Morgan Broekhuis (2009-10 & 2008-09, Colorado Springs Christian High School) and Lauren Van Orden (2007-08, Grandview High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Putnicki will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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

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