

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**NOVI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 17, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Erin O'Leary of Novi High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year. O'Leary is the first Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Novi 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 O'Leary 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, O'Leary joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert 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 5-foot-10 junior setter led the Wildcats to a 52-1 record and the Class A state championship this past season. O'Leary amassed 1,451 assists, 361 digs, 203 kills and 76 service aces while posting a kill percentage of .510 and a hitting percentage of .462. A two-time MaxPreps First Team All-American, she was a member of the 2016 USA Volleyball Girls' Youth National Team, which placed second at the North, Central American and Caribbean Volleyball Confederation (NORCECA) Girls' U18 Continental Championship this past September.

O'Leary has volunteered locally as part of an elementary school literacy-outreach program and as a youth volleyball coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community-service initiatives through her church youth group. "Erin has a great sense of the game," said Aaron Smaka, head coach of Grand Haven High. "She has a very high volleyball IQ and is one of the best decision-makers as a setter as that I've seen. She is the engine of that team."

O'Leary has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Michigan beginning in the fall of 2018.

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.

O'Leary joins recent Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Players of the Year Gia Milana (2015-16, Romeo High School), Katherine Carlson (2014-15, Notre Dame Preparatory School), Carli Snyder (2013-14 & 2012-13, Dakota High School), Maddy Doyle (2011-12, Mercy High School), Alex Lovell (2010-11, Marian High School), Rachel Charles (2009-10, Marian High School), Megan Hendrickson (2008-09, Jenison High School) and Molly Coldren (2007-08, Notre Dame Preparatory School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, O'Leary 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.

###