

**Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)**

**OUR LADY ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Emma Funk of Our Lady Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade Mississippi Volleyball Player of the Year. Funk is the second Gatorade Mississippi Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Our Lady Academy.

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 Funk as Mississippi'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, Funk 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 outside hitter and middle blocker led the Crescents to a 33-7 record and their fifth consecutive Class I state championship this past season. Funk amassed 748 kills, 89 blocks and 34 service aces. A MaxPreps First Team Small School All-American, she is also the two-time Sun Herald Player of the Year and a two-time Clarion Ledger First Team All-State selection.

Funk has volunteered locally on behalf of a nursing home and Students Against Destructive Decisions. "Emma Funk is a one-person wrecking crew; she's hard to stop," said Allison Burchyett, head coach at Lewisburg High. "She's got good power, but she's very strategic too. She can put her team on her back and carry them when she has to. She's just a really, really good volleyball player."

Funk has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Funk joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Volleyball Players of the Year Conley Chinn (2015-16, Jackson Academy), Blake Mohler (2014-15, Ocean Springs High School), Brittany Corder (2013-14, Our Lady Academy), Breann Hedin (2012-13, Long Beach High School), Sarah Farmer (2011-12, Tupelo High School), Victoria Nutting (2010-11, Hancock High School), Alison Welch (2009-10, Olive Branch High School), Charquita Anderson (2008-09, Southaven High School) and Claire Franks (2007-08, Olive Branch High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Funk 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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