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**WALTER PANAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Yvette Burcescu of Walter Panas High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade New York Volleyball Player of the Year. Burcescu is the first Gatorade New York Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Walter Panas 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 Burcescu as New York'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, Burcescu 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 6-foot-3 junior outside hitter led the Panthers to a 51-2-4 record and the Class A state championship this past season. Burcescu recorded 663 kills, 125 service aces and 103 blocks. A MaxPreps First Team All-American, she was also named MVP of the Class A state tournament and earned First Team All-State honors for the second time.

Burcescu has volunteered locally on behalf of a nursing home and her school's STAR (Students Terminating Abusive Relationships) Club. "Burcescu has always been an exceptionally powerful and intelligent hitter," said Mark Finegan, head coach at Pelham Memorial High. "She's worked hard to become a very good all-around player too. She serve-receives and defends with tremendous energy and skill, and her serve is overpowering, the best I witnessed all season."

Burcescu has maintained an A average 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.

Burcescu joins recent Gatorade New York Volleyball Players of the Year Sam Burgio (2015-16, Eden High School), Leah Meyer (2014-15, St. Mary's High School), Luisa Schirmer (2013-14 & 2012-13, Pittsford Sutherland High School), Melissa Rigo (2011-12, Elwood-John H. Glenn High School), Heather Feldman (2010-11, Eden High School), Mary Cushman (2009-10 & 2008-09, West Irondequoit High School) and Erin Little (2007-08, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Burcescu 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.