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**COX MILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Taylor Rowland of Cox Mill High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year. Rowland is the first Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cox Mill 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 Rowland as North Carolina'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, Rowland 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 Chargers to a 34-0 record and the Class 3A state championship this past season. Rowland tallied 451 kills, 179 digs, 43 service aces and 21 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .605 and a hitting percentage of .495. A MaxPreps Medium School 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.

A talented artist, Rowland has volunteered locally as part of multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit cancer research, and she has donated her time both as a youth volleyball coach and as a nursery care provider at her church. "Taylor brings more to the court than just her hitting power," said Patti Chason, head coach of Hickory Ridge High. "She is a smart player who knows when to hit her power shots but also when she can drop in an off-speed hit or even a tip."

Rowland has maintained a weighted 3.18 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.

Rowland joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Players of the Year Julia Scoles (2015-16, South Iredell High School), Katharine Franz (2014-15, Charlotte Country Day School), Darian Mack (2013-14, Wakefield High School), Eve Davis (2012-13, Charlotte Latin School), Madison Bugg (2011-12 & 2009-10, Cardinal Gibbons High School), Kristen Harris (2010-11, Apex High School), Andrea Beck (2008-09, Mt. Tabor High School) and Katie Kabbes (2007-08, Cardinal Gibbons High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Rowland 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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