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**TUMWATER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 Kennedy Croft of Tumwater High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Washington Volleyball Player of the Year. Croft is the first Gatorade Washington Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Tumwater 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 Croft as Washington'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, Croft 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 led the Thunderbirds to a 25-1-2 record and the Class 2A state championship this past season. Croft tallied 480 kills, 263 digs, 47 service aces and 35 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .429 and a hitting percentage of .328. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Croft recorded 19 kills and 12 digs in a 3-0 win over Woodland High in the state final. She concluded her junior year with 937 kills in her prep volleyball career.

Croft has volunteered locally as a freshman mentor at Tumwater High and as a youth volleyball coach. "Kennedy is a six-rotation player who passes, hits out of the back row really well and can hit from multiple locations on the net," said Bobby McGivern, co-head coach of Emerald Ridge High. "Her demeanor is always the same on the court: no panic, just calm."

Croft has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at Gonzaga University 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.

Croft joins recent Gatorade Washington Volleyball Players of the Year Shayne McPherson (2015-16, Kennedy Catholic High School), Carson Heilborn (2014-15, Auburn Riverside High School), Courtney Schwan (2013-14 & 2012-13, Bellarmine Preparatory School), Katlyn Mataya (2011-12, Burlington-Edison High School), Rachel Roeder (2010-11, Issaquah High School), Alexis Olgard (2009-10, Mead High School), Kylin Munoz (2008-09, Monroe High School) and Brittany Quick (2007-08, Hanford High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Croft 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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