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**NEWMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 Mariah Whalen of Newman Catholic High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Wisconsin Volleyball Player of the Year. Whalen is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Newman Catholic 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 Whalen as Wisconsin'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, Whalen 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-1 senior outside hitter led the Cardinals to a 37-7-1 record and the Division 4 state championship this past season. Whalen amassed 682 kills, 315 digs, 97 service aces and 86 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .527 and a hitting percentage of .440. A MaxPreps First Team All-American and the MaxPreps Small Schools National Player of the Year, Whalen recorded 25 kills and nine digs in a 3-0 win over Clayton High in the state final. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 2,402 kills, 1,005 digs, 324 service aces and 283 blocks.

Whalen has served as part of a mission trip to Chicago, where she helped feed the homeless. She has also volunteered locally on a fundraising campaign to benefit breast cancer research and as a youth volleyball coach. "What Mariah has done for her team, not just the year but over the past four years, has been remarkable," said Luke Herriges, head coach of Oshkosh North High. "She is always going 100 percent on court and has a very high volleyball IQ. She plays a very cerebral game."

Whalen has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Wisconsin 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.

Whalen joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Volleyball Players of the Year M.E. Dodge (2015-16, East Troy High School), Carly Townsend (2014-15, Germantown High School), Simone Lee (2013-14, Menomonee Falls High School), Kaysie Shebeneck (2012-13 & 2011-12, Burlington High School), Crystal Graff (2010-11 & 2009-10, La Follette High School), Carol Henney (2008-09, Catholic Central High School) and Janelle Gabrielsen (2007-08, Menomonee Falls High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Whalen 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.

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